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FLEMISH PAINTING

FROM VAN EYCK TO BREUGHEL

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FLEMISH PAINTING

BY PIERRE COURTHION

with 46 colour plates

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CONTENTS

List of Illustrations 6

INTRODUCTION 9

BEFORE JAN VAN EYCK 12

VAN EYCK 14

FROM ROGIER VAN DER WEYDEN TO GEERTGEN TOT SINT JANS 18

PORTRAIT PAINTING 28

STILL-LIFE PAINTING 32

LANDSCAPE PAINTING 33

THE DIABOLIC ELEMENT 35

PIETER BREUGHEL THE ELDER 39

The Plates 43

Biographical Notes 93

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Bosch, Hieronymus: *The Crowning with Thorns.* c. 1490–1500
28$^{7}/_{8}$″×23$^{1}/_{4}$″. National Gallery, London 80
The Adoration of the Kings. c. 1495. 54$^{3}/_{8}$″×28$^{3}/_{8}$″. Prado, Madrid 81
St Christopher. c. 1490–1500
44$^{1}/_{2}$″×28$^{3}/_{8}$″. Boymans Museum, Rotterdam 82
The Garden of Delights. c. 1485. 76$^{3}/_{4}$″×86$^{5}/_{8}$″. Prado, Madrid ... 83
The Hay-Wain. c. 1480. 53$^{1}/_{8}$″×74$^{3}/_{4}$″. Prado, Madrid 84, 85
The Conjuror. 20$^{7}/_{8}$″×25$^{5}/_{8}$″. Musée Municipal, St.-Germain-en-Laye 86

Breughel, Pieter the Elder: *The Triumph of Death.* 1562
46$^{1}/_{8}$″×63$^{3}/_{4}$″. Prado, Madrid 88
The Massacre of the Innocents. c. 1567
45$^{5}/_{8}$″×63″. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna 89
The Peasant Dance. c. 1566
44$^{7}/_{8}$″×64$^{5}/_{8}$″. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna 90
The Corn Harvest. 1565
46$^{1}/_{8}$″×63″. Metropolitan Museum, New York 91
The Conversion of St Paul. 1567
42$^{1}/_{2}$″×61$^{3}/_{8}$″. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna 92

Bouts, Dieric: *The Altarpiece of the Sacrament.* 1464–7
70$^{7}/_{8}$″×114$^{1}/_{8}$″. *The Last Supper* (Central Panel). St Pierre, Louvain 60
The Justice of Emperor Otto: The Ordeal by Fire. 1470–5
127$^{5}/_{8}$″×71$^{5}/_{8}$″. Musées Royaux, Brussels 61
The Entombment. 35$^{3}/_{8}$″×29$^{1}/_{8}$″. National Gallery, London 62
Portrait of a Man. c. 1460–70
12″×8$^{1}/_{2}$″. Metropolitan Museum, New York 63

Broederlam, Melchior: *The Flight into Egypt*
Detail from a wing of an altarpiece. 1398
Musée, Dijon 45

Christus, Petrus: *Portrait of a Young Woman*
After 1446. 11″×8$^{1}/_{4}$″. Staatliche Museen, Berlin-Dahlem 55

Dalem, Cornelis van: *Landscape with Shepherds*
c. 1550–60. 18$^{1}/_{2}$″×26$^{3}/_{4}$″. Prado, Madrid 75

David, Gerard: *The Marriage of Cana*
c. 1500–10. 37$^{3}/_{4}$″×50$^{3}/_{8}$″. Louvre, Paris 64
The Deposition. 24$^{3}/_{4}$″×24$^{3}/_{8}$″. National Gallery, London 65

Eyck, Jan van: *St Barbara.* 1434
$12^{5}/_{8}'' \times 7^{1}/_{8}''$. Musée Royal, Antwerp 49
The Marriage of Giovanni Arnolfini and Giovanna Cenami. 1434
$32^{1}/_{4}'' \times 23^{1}/_{2}''$. National Gallery, London 50
Portrait of Margaret van Eyck. 1434
$12^{5}/_{8}'' \times 10^{1}/_{4}''$. Musée Communal, Bruges 51
The Ghent Altarpiece. 1430–2
$145^{5}/_{8}'' \times 194^{7}/_{8}''$
The Virgin's Face (Detail from the Central Panel). St Bavon, Ghent 52
Angels Singing and Angels making Music
(From the Wings). St Bavon, Ghent 53
The Virgin and Chancellor Rolin. c. 1436
$26'' \times 24^{3}/_{8}''$. Louvre, Paris 54

Goes, Hugo van der: *The Portinari Altarpiece.* 1476–8
$96^{1}/_{2}'' \times 228^{3}/_{8}''$
Tommaso Portinari with his Sons and Sts Anthony and Thomas and *Maria Portinari with her Daughters and Sts Margaret and Mary Magdalene* (Wings). Uffizi, Florence 67
The Adoration of the Shepherds
(Central Panel). Uffizi, Florence 68, 69
The Death of the Virgin. After 1458
$58^{5}/_{8}'' \times 48''$. Musée Communal, Bruges 70

Gossaert, Jan, called Mabuse: *The Virgin of Lovaïna.* c. 1516
$17^{3}/_{4}'' \times 15^{3}/_{8}''$. Prado, Madrid 74

Isenbrandt, Adriaen: *The Rest on the Flight*
$13^{7}/_{8}'' \times 12^{5}/_{8}''$. Alte Pinakothek, Munich 78

Leyden, Lucas van: *Lot and his Daughters*
$22^{7}/_{8}'' \times 13^{3}/_{8}''$. Louvre, Paris 79

Massys, Quinten: *Christ presented to the People*
$63'' \times 47^{1}/_{4}''$. Prado, Madrid 87

Master of Flémalle (? Robert Campin): *The Nativity.* 1425
$34^{1}/_{4}'' \times 27^{5}/_{8}''$. Musée, Dijon 47
Portrait of a Woman. c. 1430–5
$15^{3}/_{4}'' \times 10^{5}/_{8}''$. National Gallery, London 48

Master of the 'Heures du Maréchal de Boucicaut': *Lady at Mass*
Detail from the 'Heures à l'Usage de Paris'. c. 1410–15
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris 46

MEMLINC, HANS: *The Presentation in the Temple.* c. 1463
23½"×19". National Gallery of Art, Washington 71
Portrait of Maria Moreel. 1480
14⅝"×10⅝". Hospice St Jean, Bruges 72
Portrait of Maria Portinari
16⅝"×13⅜". Metropolitan Museum, New York 73

PATENIER, JOACHIM: *The Temptation of St Anthony*
61"×68⅛". Prado, Madrid 76
Charon crossing the Styx. 25¼"×40½". Prado, Madrid 77

SINT JANS, GEERTGEN TOT: *St John in the Wilderness*
16½"×11". Staatliche Museen, Berlin-Dahlem 66

WEYDEN, ROGIER VAN DER: *The Altarpiece of the Sacraments.* c. 1445
78¾"×88⅝"
The Crucifixion in a Church (Centre of the Altarpiece).
Musée Royal, Antwerp 56
The Beaune Altarpiece. c. 1443–6. 84⅝"×220½". *The Entry of the Blessed into Paradise* and *The Fall of the Damned* (From the Wings)
Hôtel-Dieu, Beaune 57
The Braque Triptych. c. 1450. 16⅛"×53½". *St Mary Magdalene* (Right Wing). Louvre, Paris 58
Portrait of a Woman. c. 1435
14⅛"×10⅝". National Gallery of Art, Washington 59

INTRODUCTION

IT MUST BE SAID OUTRIGHT that the title of this book, *Flemish Painting*, is used in a broad sense, to include not only the artists who came from the County of Flanders, but those of the counties and duchies of what were the Netherlands. In the fourteenth century, according to Fierens-Gevaert, everything that "came from Belgium and Holland" was called "Flemish," and we shall therefore use this word to designate the masters of the period with which we are dealing: those Primitives who, in reality, were much more skilled than the painters of the Renaissance.

It is common knowledge nowadays that art is more sensitive than anything else to exchanges of influence and to relations with the universal—the great forms, like great ideas, move in that direction. But, just as one type of vine yields, if it is transported, a wine of a different and special taste, so painting acquires a distinct colour and style, a sudden sharpness, at certain moments and in a given region.

So it was in Flanders before the birth of Jan van Eyck. It was as though, at that moment, everything was preparing to compose the background from which there would arise that unique, incomparable homage to the Christian faith, the Ghent Altarpiece, which seems to crown all that the "International Style" had been attempting before it, whether in the works of the Maîtres à l'Oeillet of Berne, Fribourg and Zurich, or in those of Conrad Witz, that contemporary of Robert Campin. But there is also another criterion, according to E. Panofsky: we may, in the manuscripts illuminated by the anonymous artists who worked for the Maréchal de Boucicaut between 1410 and 1415, recognise the painter responsible for spreading from the Paris studios to Flanders the first elements of that style which was to find its definition in the Van Eycks.

One fact is certain: at the end of the fourteenth century all the purely Flemish works of art were French in character. Paris seems to have been the international school in which, at that moment, a sort of revolution in technique was taking place. For environment counts for more than race or climate, and it was an environment where the great naturalist movement, in which quite a large number of Flemish artists were concerned, was making its appearance. "Nothing," says Louis Gillet, "can obscure the fact that the Renaissance of the Van Eycks was a child of Paris."

The miniature painters began to replace gold-leaf backgrounds by grass, flowers, trees and landscapes, and gradually to open up effects of perspective and light, to suggest space with a growing realism. This naturalism—"dramatic and yet measured, accurate and yet not vulgar"—found its impulse in the studios working for the courts of France and Burgundy; and although, later on, Flemish influence was to be often conspicuous in works like the Aix *Annunciation*, this was a reaction from the primary impulse, which came from the Paris School.

But what is this Flemish art whose stages we propose to trace? How are we to describe it without falling into the errors of Taine, to whom a work of art was "determined by the general state of mind and custom surrounding it"?

From the precursors of Van Eyck to Breughel its characteristics altered in an extraordinary way: they pass from the gravity that suits religious meditation, from the work of art contained in the honeycomb of a Gothic framework airy with landscapes, before which carefully composed groups stand out, to a bird's-eye evocation of great crowds of people distributed in groups over wide spaces.

Let us concentrate on the first phase of this painting and try to enter into its spirit. Just as, in French art, from the *Belleville Breviary* onwards, we find a predilection for profiles of princes and donors sensitively outlined, I think we can characterise Flemish art, from the Master of Flémalle onwards, by a certain amplitude in the evocation of highly individualised characters, a taste for intimate withdrawal, and a predilection for accessories (still-lifes with books, flowers, utensils, mirrors and hanging lamps), rather than ornaments.

But there is, above all, a strong impulse towards mysticism, in the largest and loftiest sense. Although the Flemish paintings rarely have the imposing scale of the frescos that adorn the churches and monasteries of Italy (the biggest altarpieces are the Ghent polyptych, the one at Beaune, and the Portinari triptych), what concentration they achieve in what is often a very small space! The Flemish artist is always careful not to exceed the elements of painting by over-emphasising the story of the scene he is trying to describe: he describes it in fact clearly, but without too much insistence. He practically never does violence to the optical qualities and to the sphere of what is purely plastic.

To the French critic, Théophile Thoré, naïveté and sincerity are the characteristics of the Flemish painters. "However grave the subjects they are treating," he writes in his book on the Antwerp Museum (published under the pseudonym W. Bürger), "they always keep close to nature. Serene reason dominates their compositions, even when they are assembling the elect of the centuries around a Lamb, or when they are celebrating the mysterious Sacraments, or when they are marrying fair-haired St Catherine to a Child who is placing a ring on her finger. They are always down to earth, even when they are soaring to Heaven." And Thoré continues: "All of them have an equal respect for everything that exists in the universe, and they give scrupulous attention to each thing—to the landscape with its thousand features, to the grass blade as well as to the rose tree branch, or to the boughs of oak, to the bird as well as to the lion, to the cottage as well as to the most chiselled architecture. In the furthest recesses of their backgrounds you discover, one after another, marvellous details, after you have been struck by the whole."

There is one work of art which seems to me, by the mixture of poetry and reality that makes its strength, to sum up all that is most frank, most incisive, and most fully transcendent in Flemish art. And that is the small *St Barbara* (page 49) in the Antwerp Museum. This pencil drawing, sparely coloured with a few heightening touches of ochre and blue, on a page thirteen inches high by seven wide, lays open to our vision one of the most imposing scenes in all painting. Jan van Eyck shows the saint seated, with a book open on her knees

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and the palm of martyrdom in her hand, in front of the half-built cathedral while, far behind her, the masons and stone-cutters are at work close beneath the tall Gothic tower. In the tower there are three pointed windows. These three openings, which the painter has emphasised with three blue crosses in water colour, are a reference to the prison in which Dioscuros, father of St Barbara, before going away on a journey shut up his daughter with some idols. But Barbara, who had been converted to the Christian religion, smashed these idols and then caused three windows to be opened in honour of the Trinity.

Of this tiny panel, which shows us the image of Faith with the Church in the distance—the antithesis of the Old Testament Babel which Breughel was to paint a hundred and twenty-nine years later—hand, head and heart have combined to make an immense work of art. This evocation of the saint (when she was still a young girl her father beheaded her with his own hands and was then struck by lightning) forms the best of preludes to the art of the Flemish painters, those masters of line drawing in whose painting there is always a kind of linear progression which my eyes find it a delight to follow.

BEFORE JAN VAN EYCK

As is well known, nothing is more difficult than to disentangle the various influences which determine a style at the moment when a school of painting is being born, especially when the work is complicated by national claims, often unjustified. It is impossible to avoid sometimes including in our classification elements that fall outside it.

Next to the *Tanners' Crucifixion* (about 1400), remarkable for its elegantly elongated style still containing the wide gold-leaf background characteristic of the Parisian School, one work stands out and, by its contrasting viewpoints and its manner of stressing and isolating each group within separate contours, marks a new conception. This is the painting executed by Melchior Broederlam under the influence of Claus Sluter (Master Sculptor of Dijon) and placed in position in 1399. It consists of two wing panels, now in the Dijon Museum, which strike visitors by their brilliance, their fresh state of preservation and their astonishing realism. These scenes of the Advent and of the Childhood of Christ appear to be a direct emanation from daily life—so actual and natural do the Virgin and Child seem to be. In one corner God the Father rises out of a two-fold crown of red and blue angels as in the illuminated manuscripts, and Sienese influence can be recognised in the style and colouring of the architecture; but the detailed feeling for nature, the drawing of the bushes and grasses, the Angel of the Annunciation, and the St. Joseph in the *Flight into Egypt* (page 45), are already definitely Flemish. Look at the St Joseph: in contrast to the extremely delicate Virgin on her ass, he is drinking from his leather bottle with a movement whose crudity is a foretaste of the stocky, scored peasants of the Elder Breughel.

But the strongest influence on Van Eyck's conception of his art is surely that of the unknown Master who painted the Book of Hours for Jean le Meingre, known as Boucicaut, Marshal to Charles VI. In the miniature of the *Lady at Mass* (page 46), for instance, the way in which people are placed in the interior and surrounded by highly defined furniture and other objects, is prophetic of the great court painter's firm style, impeccable execution and complete clarity.

Mention must also be made of the Limbourg brothers, those artists from Brabant who, before Fouquet, helped to enrich the School of Paris with their vistas of landscapes that are already impressionist. Not enough emphasis has been given, in our opinion, to the brilliance which these three painters brought into the art of their work on the *Très Riches Heures* of Jean de Berry. By their clarity of exposition, the brightness of the green in their meadows, and their sense of line and arabesque, the Limbourg brothers have their share in the evolution of Flemish painting—in its characteristic way of opening out upon landscapes which, though no doubt less composed than those of the Italians, are also more varied and more fresh. As Philippe Verdier has well remarked: "The Flemish blood brought in by the last generation of the Duc de Berry's 'ouvriers' carried with it a load of mysticism which overcame the filter of Paris and overflowed in visions."

This quality of inspired realism is evident in the works of the man now known as the Master of Flémalle. This anonymous painter, successively called the Maître de la Souricière (one of the wings of the Mérode diptych shows St Joseph making mousetraps), then the Master of Mérode, and finally the Master of Flémalle, who has for some time now been identified as Robert Campin, was born at Valenciennes in about 1380 and died in 1444, and his paintings (the *Miracle of the Wand* and the *Marriage of the Virgin* in the Prado, and the *Annunciation* in the Dijon Museum) were done between 1420 and 1430.

What makes all this more difficult to disentangle is the abundance, from this time onwards, of great anonymous school pieces, such as the Aix *Annunciation* (1445), the Avignon *Pietà* (about 1475) and the works of the Maître de Moulins and the Berne Maître à l'Oeillet (active in 1480). It was a time of exchanges, of migrations of artists and craftsmen from one studio to another—the moment at which there took shape the "International Style" whose mingled elements were analysed by Courajod at the beginning of the century.

It will not, then, cause surprise if Campin seems to us, with his start of fifteen years, a precursor of Conrad Witz (whose father, if indeed he was a decorative artist in the service of Philip the Good, he is likely to have known, according to one theory), and related also to various Masters of the Upper Rhine.

The value of the Master of Flémalle lies, above all, in his limpid background landscapes, his bright walls and his tables covered with books and vases of flowers (as in the Mérode *Annunciation* and the National Gallery *Madonna with the Wicker Screen).* He sometimes uses blues and yellows that are prophetic of Vermeer. He is rich in *grisailles,* in ornaments and in architectural motifs. In the Dijon *Nativity* (page 47) Campin gives us great sharpness in the drawing, an imposing landscape opening above the roof of the manger and angels that are a prelude to those of the Master of Moulins. His Virgin, with her fair hair drawn back behind the ears, makes a powerful linear design. That the whole scene may be visible, the painter has placed it out of doors, in front of mountains that recall those of the Chantilly miniatures. The shepherds look as if they are coming from inside the building towards the Child, who is laid outside.

The whole has a harmonious density. The fresh blues, the deep reds, the clear olive greens, the whites with just a touch of violet, the monumental effect of the colour and the extremely attractive savour with which the materials are rendered—all this makes the Master of Flémalle an exceptional artist who valued painting in itself.

In Flémalle's *Nativity,* as in Broederlam's *Flight into Egypt,* we see landscapes that soar as they recede, like those painted later in Florence by Gozzoli. Jean-Gabriel Lemoine has asked what was the origin of those bird's-eye views which, in Flemish painting, go on till Breughel, and finds it in the maps drawn by the map-makers of the period. They were trying to present the earth from very high up, in order to show us a large expanse of it. We shall see that by this means Van Eyck, in the Ghent Altarpiece, was to succeed in reconciling the discoveries of the new perspective with the optics of the scene depicted, which is circumscribed within a closed world that looks rather as though it were convex, like those mirrors of the period in which the reflected objects group themselves about a central hearth.

VAN EYCK

THE MAN known as Jan van Eyck is chiefly famous for having perfected the technique of painting in oils (Vasari was mistaken in attributing its invention to him). But his value goes much further. Everything he did has a wonderful regularity, a cunningly distributed lucidity. His work is legible, down to the last details of the soil, the still life passages and the vistas through the windows. The artist leads us into the space of his picture as an angel might take us by the hand to give us access to the country in which enchantment is sister to reality.

In Van Eyck everything is seen and constructed in very slender facets—so close together, indeed, that they are invisible to anyone who is content with a passing glance of admiration at this sharply designed, firmly set down, exceptionally incisive art (we meet with something of the same quality again, much later, in the early Rubens). It is here that lies, I think, the special characteristic of Van Eyck's art: there is no striving for effect, no seeking after chiaroscuro as a means of simplification. Everything in his pictures is simple, given to us to look at in full daylight. Not a trace of mannerisms! Everything is situated (Van Eyck is the master of surroundings, of the environment provided by rooms which feminine hands have prepared and in which nothing is missing—neither the carpet, nor the bunch of flowers freshly placed in the blue faience vase). Nothing is neglected. This man managed to draw from the new technique of painting, based on oil, infinite resources, and had the gift of going to their limits at a single attempt.

Jan van Eyck may not be the sole author but is at least the master craftsman of the Ghent polyptych, that visual *summa* comparable to the constructions of the theological thinking of the medieval Universities. Although Hubert van Eyck was his collaborator at first and may have given him his start, we now know that it is to Jan alone that we owe the completion of the altarpiece in its marvellous unity. This work of art, one of the most extraordinary and moving ever created (I find myself constantly comparing it to the fugal music of Bach), is in the church of St Bavon at Ghent; it is 145⁵/₈ ins high and 194⁷/₈ wide and was painted between 1422 and 1432. After the admirable *Three Marys at the Sepulchre* in the Van Beuningen Collection, it is the first picture of major importance by Jan van Eyck known to us. He was thirty-two when it was undertaken, and forty-two at the moment of its completion (pages 52, 53).

What a vast page it is! though its actual proportions are soon forgotten, and we are inside it. We find ourselves taking part in the All Saints service, on which the altarpiece is a kind of visual commentary. The Holy Spirit covers the world with His inspiration: it is the soul's true Fountain of Youth. The grasses and foliage with their fresh shades of green (each flower and each scent recognisable) frame and magnify the vision depicted in the lower central panel. How gravely and with what infinite loving-kindness the Holy Lamb, symbol of the Redeemer, lets flow His blood into the ciborium! Closely encircled by a choir of angels of all the hierarchies, He is more widely surrounded by a great crowd of male and female saints (their palms have a litany-like rhythm), of Popes, cardinals, fathers of the church and theologians. Further off, on the side panels, come the kings, the knights and the hermits, guided by a giant St Christopher.

I confess that I find this act of faith in images infinitely more moving than Raphael's *Disputa*, painted seventy years later, in the Stanze of the Vatican. The Urbino painter could not command the same unity, nor could his less vivid palette present to the eyes these unequalled singing reds. Above all, he had not the same fervour: he could not give that impression of unshadowed faith, finally victorious over the world through the Mystic Body, which Van Eyck has succeeded in suggesting in all completeness in space and time. However great the monumental and dramatic qualities of the composition of Raphael's fresco, its evocation of the divine is less present and radiant than that of Van Eyck's polyptych, in which humanity is brought together within the unity of the supreme Redemption. In this picture the altar of the Earth, where the Lamb of God dwells, and that of Heaven, where "the Lamb as sacrifice" stands upright, are one in the Kingdom of Heaven, while Raphael's fresco shows the discord of men beneath the irreducible harmony of the Trinity.

Time, in its eternal cycle, is contained in this absolutely complete work of art, even more than in those earlier works which have a family relationship to it—I am thinking of the Duccio altarpiece and the Giotto frescos in the Scrovegni Chapel. It forms a world apart—a world into which we enter and, as we do so, forget that painting is something interposed between the artist and us. The superior reality of its suggestive power invades us, submerges us and fills us with its sovereign vision.

In contrast to this glorification—and as a complement to the *Annunciation* on the back which opens the mystery of the Lamb "glorified by the sacrifice and resurrection of the Saviour"—there stand *Adam and Eve*, the beginning of the innumerable branches of humanity. Their sin hurled humanity into crime and distress; but the redeeming Blood has flowed and, as Fierens-Gevaert writes: "The Lamb has come and is triumphant. The homage of Earth and Heaven surrounds His divinity".

There are here no more of those wide expanses of flat tints, or of those two-dimensional figures standing out against a gold background: instead, the painter whose device was "*Als ick kan*" (as best I can) has given us this continuous modelling, this evocative clarity and these contours which make us forget their existence.

The altarpiece has a considerable history. It became so famous that at Ghent, on April 23rd, 1458,—the occasion of the entry of Philip the Good, the painter's ducal patron, through the Porte de Bruges,—a *tableau vivant* was organised in the Place du Marais, representing its great central scene, the Glorification of the Lamb. Later it went through a long series of vicissitudes: it was nearly burnt, it was dismembered and its wing-pieces dispersed, and was only finally reconstituted not so long ago.

After this masterpiece even the finest panels of Van Eyck look pale, at least momentarily. But let us leave the Cathedral of Saint Bavon and return to rooms in which our eyes may get used once more to the normal scale. There are still marvels in store for us.

The *Virgin of Autun*, or *Virgin and Chancellor Rolin* (page 54), was painted in about 1435, shortly after the Ghent altarpiece was completed. In it everything is sharply defined and carefully realised: nothing is skimped. The Chancellor kneels before the Virgin, and behind him, seen through the openings in the colonnade of dark marble where diminutive people and a peacock are walking, the whole landscape with its water, islands, bridges, squares, buildings, hills and distant blue mountains is rendered in meticulous detail. The faces are all different: they are individuals and painted with grace and brightness, but never coldly. As for the materials, in this picture their substances are differentiated with infinite fine shades in suggestion of bright and dull surfaces, of the heaviness of the soil and the misty atmosphere. How can one help admiring the protean talent which combines the gifts of the jeweller, the goldsmith, the glass painter, the mosaicist, the portrait painter, the still-life painter, the landscape painter and the architect? This wonderful achievement carries us to one of the summits of imitative art. And the scene is not any longer something added, it is integral to the painting.

The *Virgin with Canon van de Paele* is a more closed and intimate picture, a forerunner of the finest Holbeins. In it Jan van Eyck shows, as Thoré puts it, "an impassive Madonna seated between the two earthly powers, the priest and the warrior, the man mitred with gold and the man of iron. Nothing is more instructive than to compare the ample, monumental portrait of the Canon—whose form is suggested in all its continuous volume, yet with a facetted contour that delimits it in each one of its axes—to the rounded figures, sculptural in their aspect as though carved in stone and polished, which Jehan Fouquet was to show, fifteen years later, rising before his architectural motifs adorned with the gold backgrounds of Mediterranean painting. It has often been pointed out that Jan van Eyck's modelling is more like something inscribed in space and Fouquet's has a more continuous relief. In the artist from Touraine everything is massively convex, and his breadth of design is still related to Tuscan fresco technique; his flesh colouring—a barely tinted grey, like a fine pale wash over marble—contrasts with the more sanguine or hectic—in any case more brilliant—pinks of Jan van Eyck, in whom the break with the craft of his predecessors is so amazingly pronounced. Let us remember that Van Eyck was only three years younger than Fra Angelico. It is hard to believe when we think of the change of technique which took place then between fresco painting and the cunning use of oils, to whose perfecting the Flemish painter largely contributed. Van Eyck has, as Jamot says, "all the forms of greatness, those of matter and those of the spirit".

Look at the way in which he places his people in a room and inaugurates the intimate portrait—raising it so far from the particular to the general that the whole of humanity is to be found in his individuals. Jan van Eyck not only outdoes the other Flemish portrait-painters, he is in a different class. This

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extraordinary gift of universalising a particular man is to be seen in his painting (page 50) of the Arnolfini couple (National Gallery, London), which for a time was believed to be the double portrait of Van Eyck himself and his wife (Signora Arnolfini, it is true, has some slight resemblance to the red and white portrait of Margaret van Eyck (page 51) which belongs to the Musée Communal at Bruges. The work bears the inscription *Jan van Eyck fuit hic*, which may mean either " this was Jan van Eyck " or " Jan van Eyck was here ". Since the painter was a close friend of the Arnolfinis, the second interpretation has been preferred. I know nothing comparable to the silence in this double portrait, to its sense of withdrawal, in which time seems to contract into the present of art. The sacrament of marriage here unites man and woman, drawing together by its efficacy past and future. The work contains one of those moments in which time stops—moments that seem, beyond the place and instant which form their pretext, to resume the whole long chain of the species and the gravity of the perpetually renewed uniting of man and woman. The brownish reds, the fresh green of the wife's dress, the broken shadows on the floor, the narrow opening of the window, the still-lifes of fruit and pattens, the little dog and the convex mirror reflecting the whole scene—all this speaks a language of unsurpassed purity. We find ourselves before a work of art which, far from emptying, fills afresh at every fresh examination. Its representative aspect melts away and is forgotten in its intrinsically plastic value, through which the painter has been able to suggest what the naked eye cannot see, to epitomize a colour-scheme and to present to the onlooker each element in its proper scale and due place in the hierarchy.

Such are the chief stages in the work of Jan van Eyck. To say that this robust and complete painter was at the origin of everything later accomplished by Flemish art is something of a tautology: and yet I am not sure that the universality of his influence has been sufficiently emphasised. The art of Jan van Eyck was destined to inspire, more or less, that of Colantonio and Antonello da Messina in Italy, and in Portugal the knightly painting of Nuno Gonçalves; and in France his rigorous clarity was to be seen again, as though superimposed, on the faces in the pictures of the Master of Moulins. Finally—via Massys—Van Eyck was to set his mark even on the portraits of professional men by Hans Holbein the Younger.

FROM ROGIER VAN DER WEYDEN TO GEERTGEN TOT SINT JANS

A PUPIL OF ROBERT CAMPIN, Rogier van der Weyden sometimes continues and amplifies the technique of Van Eyck, seeking in it a more obvious emotion. Thoré writes that "with him the lines begin to grow more supple and to wind about in the great gestures of grief and passion". Yet I confess I have not always for Rogier the frantic admiration which was general among the art-lovers of the last century. I sometimes find in this painter an almost too controlled technique, a slight mannerism and a somewhat dry articulation to his arabesques.

In the *Angelic Salutation* in the Louvre (about 1432—1435) the faces are obvious, with an almost sickly sweetness. The best things in the picture are the hands, the still life painting, the white lily in the Delft vase, the ewer and the copper basin. The rest suggests, if not a copy, at least a school-piece.

The *Nativity* and *Pietà* (1435—38) of the Miraflores altarpiece at Granada have a different accent. Their *trompe-l'œil* and the Gothic frame and the *grisaille* painting of the sculptures, which surround them with a pseudo-portal, seem to bear out the suggestion of Max Friedländer that Rogier may have been also a sculptor. However that may be, these two works are among the most sharply defined and beautiful of this painter.

The Madrid *Descent from the Cross*—a very famous, highly prized and much reproduced picture—hardly touches me at all, on account of its excessive pathos and its hardness; it has too many falling lines (both actually and symbolically), in spite of the admirable arabesque formed by the figure of the Magdalen. St. Mary Magdalene appears again, holding her box of ointment, in front of a clear bright landscape, in the triptych of the Braque family (page 58) in the Louvre (about 1450).

Rogier's masterpiece is undoubtedly the polyptych (page 51) executed for a Chancellor of Burgundy, Nicolas Rolin, the same man who was Van Eyck's patron. Rolin presented the city of Beaune with a great hospital, the Hôtel-Dieu, built by Jean Visscher, an architect from Brabant; and the altarpiece—begun in 1443 and finished, it is thought, in 1448—was in a way the crown of the edifice. Compared to the Ghent altarpiece it no doubt lacks firmness in its arrangement and design. Yet it is faultlessly constructed and executed. It has been argued that it is the work of several hands (that Rogier painted the portraits, Memlinc the Christ, the Virgin and St. John, and Dieric Bouts the condemned!); it may well be the work of a team, but the whole altarpiece has a unity which could only have been realised by a single artist—Rogier van der Weyden himself.

The Beaune altarpiece is one of the great renderings of the Last Judgment. Admirably conceived as a whole, and well constructed, it gives a completely orthodox interpretation of the final scene on earth. To make every episode in the drama clear, the painter has contrived to subdue the desolate landscape which frames the resurrection of the dead, whose flesh seems utterly naked and fragile in contrast to the Popes, Apostles and Saints with all their trappings. While the Hell in this altarpiece is surpassed by other interpretations, the entry into Paradise is unforgettable. But the finest part is the angels at the top of the picture, surrounding the Christ in Judgment and bearing the instruments of the Passion. They fly lightly through the space in which the tender blue folds of their robes flutter. There are others below, in mauve, with red wings, surrounding the great Archangel Michael, weigher of souls, and sounding their trumpets.

Admirable blue angels appear again, with folded wings, in the right hand panel of the *Sacraments* in the Antwerp Museum—particularly the *Marriage* and the *Extreme Unction*. These angels, and those carrying the armorial bearings of the donors in the wing-pieces of the Beaune polyptych, the yellow robed angels in the *Nativity* of the Bladelin altarpiece (Berlin) and, lastly, the ones in the Vienna *Crucifixion*, with their robes of funereal grey, have a freedom of movement, a lightness, a way of sweeping or floating gently in space, of carrying or flinging the streamers which they bear, that makes Rogier van der Weyden the painter of angels *par excellence*.

Winckler, Friedländer and Fierens-Gevaert have given up as hopeless the task of making a chronological survey of Van der Weyden's output: we must therefore look at the works themselves and leave the man in shadow. The archives are silent about him. Not a single signed picture of his is known. His work, as we have noted already, is rich in *grisaille* painting, such as we find in the Master of Flémalle and in Conrad Witz and, slightly later, in the Aix *Annunciation*. (These monochromes, reproducing sculptured capitals, became fashionable after Claus Sluter, the sculptor of the *Puits de Moïse* (1389), came on the scene; and it was, I think, Broederlam who was principally responsible, in his Dijon altarpiece, for inaugurating this cameolike type of painting, so frequent in the illuminated manuscripts). Rogier made use of his mastery of the *grisailles* to represent the interior of a church: before the background of its monochrome nave he placed the *Crucifixion* (Antwerp Museum, 1445), with St. John and the Holy Women in the foreground in blues and vivid reds, while at the far distant altar the priest is seen elevating the Host (page 56). This is a most moving work. Rogier, without ceasing to be a painter, turns theologian and succeeds, here, in suggesting the timelessness of sacrifice.

Van Mander says that this Master died " leaving abundant alms to the poor ". His burial place in the chapel of St. Catherine in the church of St. Gudule at Brussels has this dithyrambic inscription: " Beneath this stone, Rogier, you lie lifeless, you whose brush excelled in reproducing nature. Brussels mourns your death and fears she may never again see so skilled an artist ".

As we have already remarked, he was a great master who showed a high degree of skill in all his works, yet was unequal, for sometimes an excessive virtuosity became evident in his painting. The leaning towards a kind of prickly style, towards a somewhat flamboyant Gothic, begins with him: it leaves its imprint even on the minor figures, and makes the Virgin's draperies into a pendant of the ornamental decoration of the picture. This tendency was to perpetuate itself in his disciples, and then to be taken up, in an even drier form, by the German School.

DIERIC BOUTS

Dieric Bouts, the founder of the Louvain School, whom Guicciardini mentions under the name of Dieric da Lovano, seems to us nowadays the "Gothic" painter *par excellence*. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries he was forgotten, being considered as a Rogier and without further importance, so that to speak of rehabilitation in his case is no exaggeration. He was restored to a position of honour in the nineteenth century, and his work is now justly regarded as one of the most significant in Flemish painting.

Such metamorphoses in the appreciation of art and of artists occur from time to time: Rubens, who when I began studying painting still enjoyed the enthusiasm which he had inspired in Delacroix, is now dethroned—no doubt momentarily—in favour of Rembrandt, who himself underwent an eclipse at the beginning of this century. These variations of taste depend on the fashion, the aesthetics and the needs of the moment.

The art of Dieric Bouts answers to the demands of our own time by its moving, truthful, indeed sometimes naïve quality. He was born at Haarlem, and moved to Brussels early in life. He is known to have been active at Louvain from 1457 onwards. He died and was buried there, in the church of the Franciscans.

This painter, who so well combines realistic precision and religious atmosphere, is a kind of magician with colour, and a visionary. In the Louvre *Deposition* (painted in about 1460) the emotion is at its height. The grief of the Magdalen is beautifully shown: behind the dead Christ, whose stretched-out figure has an impressive stiffness, the picture seems to me to be concentrated on the grief-stricken Sinner, who is there like a cry. With her tear-reddened face, she seems to be carrying all the grief of the world, while the Virgin and St. John feel the tragedy in a deeper way and, so to speak, eternally.

But the masterpiece of Bouts is the altarpiece of the Holy Sacrament in the Church of St Pierre of Louvain (page 60). Flanked by four wing panels which are like an escort, it is certainly the most moving *Last Supper* painted up to that time. It was begun on March 23rd, 1464, and paid for by subscription. Bouts received the last payment in 1468, when he had finished the work.

Vibrant with warm colours, rich in browns, reds and sonorous blacks, punctuated with whites, like Duccio's *Maestra*, this *Last Supper* is altogether impregnated with humanity and religion. It is a work of faith and one of the summits of Flemish painting. One is struck by the quality of the composition, laid out in extremely broad planes within a space framed in geometrically combined arches. Each character is a portrait, but in the whole one feels a kind of fearful and tremulous expectancy, in which the presence of the artist persists. There is also the admirable sureness of the still-lifes—dishes, cups, pieces of bread—and against all these objects there stands out, in its radiant purity, the Host which Christ is consecrating.

In this work we are at the opposite pole from the art of Rogier van der Weyden: just as the one artist reveals himself through all the brilliancy of his technique, the other renounces spectacular means—renounces even the demonstration of a skill which would now be useless. All that he has to say is said from the heart, and yet it is all said by a painter, in painterly terms. With its space, with the unity of all the lights in the picture, with its clarity of exposition, richness in the painting of material substances and subtle disposition of the planes and of the accessories down to the ornamental floor tiles, the *Last Supper* and its wing panels form a bold work of art in which painting predominates over line drawing—a rare thing in early Flemish painting.

Dieric Bouts has incontestably the gift of moving us by inner means—not, that is to say, by external description of the people in his pictures, or by their miming like actors in a play, but by the very expressive power of the substance of the painting, by design and colour and unmannered form. In this work we are in the presence of one of the greatest expressions of religious feeling. Not a single impure element comes in to distract the painter from the business of manifesting his faith through and in the painting itself.

Bouts has been compared, with some justice, to his contemporary, the author of the *Imitation of Christ.* His *Last Supper* has the same sweetness, the same warmth, both human and divine. In addition the painter shows a fine boldness, a deep-set novelty in the way in which he interprets the theme and lets it penetrate him through and through until his emotion resolves itself in an unmixed expression which in turn communicates emotion to the onlooker.

Robert Genaille, in a recent study of Flemish Art, informs us that "two theologians, engaged for the purpose under contract, were responsible for the subtle unity of the grouping, around the central panel in which Christ blesses the bread and realises transubstantiation, of the images symbolising this mystery: the offering of bread and wine to Abraham by Melchisedek; the manducation of the Pascal Lamb; the awakening of Elijah by the angel saying to him 'Arise and eat'; and the gathering of the manna, the bread of God."

The atmosphere of this *Last Supper*—it is seen from above, and its great table has its prelude in the small table of the Jewish Easter shown in the lower right-hand wing panel—is one of a surprising unity in the midst of the four scenes framing it, which emphasise by their own movement its triangular equilibrium, with Christ at the apex and the two other points formed by the two Apostles seated in the foreground with their backs to us.

I never tire of bathing my eyes in this pictorial world, where the oppositions of warm and cold tones have a tingling and sovereign ring,—especially the *Gathering of the Manna,* a sheer masterpiece of colouring with the full Biblical depth, and the *Feeding of Elijah by the Angel,* in which weight and lightness are so successfully set against one another.

I confess I have less liking for the *Martyrdom of Saint Erasmus* (also in the church of St. Pierre, Louvain): its realistic crudity is as objective as a report, although space and landscape, with their opening out upon the infinity of light, are admirably understood. Bouts also showed himself master of an astonishing sureness when, as part of the unfinished series on the *Justice of*

Emperor Otto, he painted the *Ordeal by Fire* (page 61), in which the subtlety of the drawing and the composition surmounted by Gothic brackets recall the finest illuminations in the manuscripts of that time.

After painting the *Last Supper* Bouts was given the title of "Pourtraiteur de la ville de Louvain". It gave him the right to receive every year, like Rogier van der Weyden, the money with which to buy a ceremonial robe, and it obliged him to accompany the processions of the Holy Sacrament and the Kermesse, which he did with great piety (some moving Madonnas by him have survived). He was twice married, the second time to a very young woman with whom he did not live long, for he died on May 6th, 1475. His daughters had gone into the Convent of St. Agnes; as for his two sons, Dieric and Albert, they helped him in his work as illuminators and were both of them, especially Albert, rather good painters.

HUGO VAN DER GOES

I remember the pleasure with which, during my first visits to the Uffizi, I used to seek relief from a tremendous and sumptuous meal of Italian painting by going into a room somewhat withdrawn from the others and standing before a certain very large altarpiece whose blues and whites, reds and fresh greens and sonorous blacks were a complete change from what I had just seen.

This was the altarpiece painted in 1476—78 by Hugo van der Goes for the fabulously rich Tommaso Portinari, a representative at that time of the Medici interests at Bruges. It is an *Adoration of the Shepherds* (pages 68, 69). Portinari presented it to the church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence, where it made a considerable impression on Domenico Ghirlandaio and Lorenzo di Credi. I was enchanted by the chiaroscuro of the small angel in blue above the Madonna, and by the scarlet lily, irises and columbines in the foreground. And what peace there is in this picture, and what grandeur of style! The Holy Child, lying there on the straw, seems to radiate light like a sun over the ground and up into the shepherds' faces. To tell the truth, these shepherds rather worried me: there was something unusual in their expression.

Later on, reading the life of Van der Goes, I learned of the strange sickness that afflicted this painter who, in the red-winged angels with their fair and slightly rosy hair, and in the young Portinari with his delicate profile set off against the red and white robes of the two Saints, showed a talent which forestalled by a few years that of the Master of Moulins and is related to that of artists much nearer to us in time, such as Hals and Manet.

This large-scale painting is interesting in several ways. Not only does its technical perfection in no way interfere with its forceful expressiveness, but the central portion consists of a counterpoint: the angels bursting in from all directions to its space give a strange heightening to the serenity of the motionless kneeling characters.

In everything he did, Van der Goes, who was a friend of Joos van Ghent, revealed an original style. He was able to bind people and landscape together closely, as he did, for instance, in one of his first works, the diptych in the

Vienna Museum, one side of which is the *Lamentation* and the other the famous *Adam and Eve*, with its extraordinary Satan like a lizard or salamander with tresses braided into horns, a tyrannous personification of pride.

He was deeply religious and became a lay brother of the Roode Kloster near Brussels. What made him take this course? Disappointment in love? Dissatisfaction with his work? We do not know. It was while he was working on the Portinari altarpiece that Van der Goes decided to withdraw to this monastery of Augustinians, in which his brother was. Five or six years later the painter had attacks of nervous depression which the Prior tried to cure with music. "He could not get rid of the idea that he was damned," says the monk Ofhuys in his chronicle, brought to light by Alphonse Wauters, "and he would have drowned himself if he had not been prevented by force." He was also, it seems, tormented by wondering how he would ever finish the works he had begun. He may, too, have been intemperate: "As regards wine," says the chronicler, "he drank with his guests"—for he was allowed to receive guests—"and this made him worse."

We know little about the painter's last days, but the chronicler does mention his death: "In the year of Our Lord 1482 died the lay brother Hugo, who served here. He was so famous as a painter that beyond the Alps it was said that no one could be found at that time who was his equal."

The last painting by Van der Goes that is known is the impressive *Death of the Virgin* at Bruges (page 70), with its blue and livid paleness—a haunting work which seems to carry the impress of the chill of death which Christ has just transformed into the warmth of resurrection.

HANS MEMLINC

We now come to a painter who was long considered the best of the Flemish artists and is now chiefly appreciated as a portrait-painter. This is Hans Memlinc, with his train of followers, the studio painters of Bruges. Fromentin praised the Memlinc of the altarpieces, Madonnas and idealised compositions for combining the skills of the niellist, the glass painter, the engraver and the illuminator, and said that "the feeling is grave, the inspiration a monk's, the aim princely, the practice expert, the effect dazzling."

Obviously the *Presentation in the Temple* (page 71) in the Washington National Gallery is a very fine picture, and the *Virgin and Child* of the Chatsworth altarpiece a masterpiece of conversation painting. But, apart from these, the large scale renderings of the *Passion* and of the *Seven Joys of the Virgin* are decidedly monotonous and the *St. Ursula Reliquary* is worthy of an insipid imitator of Rogier van der Weyden.

The *Resurrection* which forms the central panel of the Louvre triptych possesses admirable tonalities of grey and rose pink, garlands of flowers and fruit and a landscape full of colour, while the line of the sleeping sentinels is very pure. This picture is close to the large work long considered one of the painter's masterpieces, the *Jacques Floreins Madonna* (about 1489—90); but this picture seems to me somewhat stiff as a whole, in spite of some very beautiful passages. All the faces are alike. The application of the paint is admirable and can be seen down to the finest detail of the carpet, and yet I must confess that, with its St James who wears a shell on his hat and gives a limp gesture of salutation, the whole thing lacks conviction.

Memlinc's principle work may be held to be the triptych of the *Mystical Marriage of St. Catherine* (about 1435—44) in the Hôpital Saint Jean at Bruges, in which in the midst of much work that is applied and tortuous and does not always look hand-made, the part representing St John on Patmos before an apocalyptic background that already suggests Bosch, and the part which shows St Catherine herself with the two kneeling nuns from the Hospital, lead the eye onwards in a single crescendo from the prayer within the cloister walls to the beatific vision piercing through space. In this, as in his other triptych at Bruges (the one in the Musée Communal), the painter reveals himself chiefly as an admirable portrait painter. We shall have more to say of his portraits later: In his compositions this artist, who migrated from Frankfurt-am-Main and was made a burgher of Bruges in 1465, has not the "Corregiesque charm" which the art critics of the nineteenth century found in him. Nor can we continue to follow Thoré when he goes so far as to say that "Memlinc is the refined expression of the art which Jan van Eyck dreamed of".

A somewhat trite symmetry in his composition, a technique that shows too much brush-work, an exhibition of knowledge pushed to a point where it smothers all freshness under a kind of grandiloquence—these are the faults we often come across in Memlinc when he is painting a polyptych.

He was at work at the moment when Flemish art, in its main lines, was becoming Italianised à la Gentile Bellini—as for instance in the work of the Master of the Tiburian Sibyl. But this art was far from having reached the end of its development: though in momentary danger of losing its own character it was about to open up a new way of looking at landscape and to prepare us for that vision of the fantastic in which it would recover its full power of expression.

JOOST VAN GHENT

The man who was known at Urbino as Giusto di Guanto was born either at Ghent or at Antwerp in about 1435. He learned his craft at Antwerp and became master there in 1460. Four years later he was made a member of the Ghent Guild of Painters, and there studied the work of Dieric Bouts. He was friend of Van der Goes, with whom he collaborated in the decoration of the church of St. Jean at Ghent.

Before he left for Italy, Joost van Ghent painted the triptych which is one of the ornaments of the cathedral of St. Bavon. In a recent attempt to reconstruct his career, it has been alleged that he painted for Duke Frederic of Montefeltro the dull series of portraits in the Louvre which have been the subject of so many attributions; but let us keep to certainties: this triptych of the Crucifixion is his work. It is somewhat traditional in its general arrangement, but one or two figures in the wing panels stand out and leave an unforgettable impression—as for example the woman seen in profile drinking a glass of the water which Moses made flow. In its range of silvery whites and golden yellows, this figure, though somewhat mannered, and in spite of the elaborate and tortuous hands, possesses greatness. The whole has neither the originality nor unity of Dieric Bouts's *Last Supper*, and there are failings in the drawing here and there, but some of the people display an imposing style, fairly completely realised, and a monumental, hieratic power.

GERARD DAVID

Here is another master, who has lately been rehabilitated: it was not till nearly the end of the nineteenth century that James Weale drew fresh attention to the work of this forgotten artist—attention which has increased steadily since then. He too is appreciated chiefly for the extraordinary freshness of his landscapes, the details of which seem as though viewed through a magnifying glass and yet form spacious visions. A good example is a wing panel from a diptych which was found not long ago in Spain.

Gerard David gives body and savour to the fullness of the Master of St Lucy and of the Master of the Tiburian Sibyl. In his paintings the landscape forming the background to religious scenes takes on the motionless and precious look of something whose serenity opposes it to the tragedy of what is happening in the picture. One has only to look—in the altarpiece of the Trumpets at Bruges (1502—1508) at the forest in the background of the *Baptism of Christ*, with its huge ivy-covered trunks, the strong rhythm of its escarpments and its foliage standing out against the blue of the distance. This altarpiece was at one time considered one of the best works of Memlinc. The study of its wing panels was rightly recommended to landscape painters as the work of a marvellous painter of foliage. The evocation of nature in this picture marks the beginning of a new element in painting which was gradually to take the place of people.

In another picture by Gerard David, the *Marriage at Cana* (page 64) in the Louvre (about 1503), the sitting postures of the women and their enchantingly oval faces are remarkable, and the whole work is powerfully present—by which I mean that it has great atmosphere and truthfulness. I have never managed to read the inscription on the knife, but have been fascinated by the still life painting of the festal meal.

There is something that already belongs to Vermeer in the extremely dense and precious substance and wonderful colour of the landscape framed by the window in the *Vierge à la Soupe au Lait* in the Brussels Museum (about 1520). Here the Renaissance makes it appearance in the form of that assured landscape—much later, such a thing would be described as a mood or state of soul—within which the picture breathes.

Has painting became steadily more integrated. Gerard David simplifies his planes and, so to speak, italianises them—though there is no documentary evidence of his having visited Italy. His power of drawing a subtle eloquence from the reality of nature is something which the Flemish painters always cultivated, and which is particularly appreciated in our time. The faces are treated in broad planes and are painted rather than drawn. I think this pervading sense of the essential forms the chief value of this master of colour, whose fresh notes were to lead on to Adam Elsheimer and, later, to others, from whose company Nicolas Poussin and Claude Gellée cannot be excluded.

Gerard David, like Dieric Bouts, belongs to the Haarlem School by virtue of the broad and lively quality of his paint and the richness of his tonal relations. Among his pupils I must mention Adrien Isenbrandt, one of the last of the Bruges painters (he died there in 1551). The *Virgin of the Seven Sorrows* which is attributed to him traditionally—not a single signed or really authenticated picture by Isenbrandt is known—is a touching work, and the idea of placing the Virgin seated *en trompe l'œil* on a Renaissance throne and surrounding her with seven painted predellas relating the significant episodes of her life, recalls the Siena *Maestra.*

GEERTGEN TOT SINT JANS

As we have already remarked, taste changes from century to century (and sometimes even from decade to decade), and our whole way of seeing is altered. With regard to the painters with whom Fromentin dealt in his *Masters of Past Time,* we have neither the same opinon nor the same taste as had the people of 1870; and the things that enchant us nowadays are very probably not the things that will touch our grandchildren. One can only accept this caprice of fashion and of visual education: the angle of view changes from one generation to another, and this sometimes causes what amount to revolutions in our way of looking at and thinking about form and colour.

Geertgen tot Sint Jans is one of those who have recently been, I will not say discovered, but better understood and more justly appreciated. With him Flemish painting ventures into the deep waters of a mysticism and fantasy which are nearer to those of the German painters (in the Van Beuningen *Virgin in Glory* the painter has tried to render sounds by showing the angel musicians in action). The secular spirit seems to be beginning to take the stage: we are entering into a different kind of expression, in which man's own thought, his inventions and his dreams will impregnate his life and his surroundings.

I know no better instance than the *St John in the Wilderness* (page 66) in the Berlin Museum. With his cheek resting on one hand, the saint sits dreaming, thinking, meditating in the loveliest, most subtle, most tenderly green of landscapes, as the sun sets amid the flutter of wings, the piping of birds and the gentle rippling of the brook to which a stag has come down to drink. Behind St John the lamb is seen sitting, waiting for the prophecy to be accomplished and for the Lamb of God to come to him for Baptism. This links the picture with Van Eyck's *Mystic Lamb*—but in reverse order, so to speak, since here the scenes do not take place in their historical and chronological sequence. But with the great things there is no such thing as history.

Geertgen tot Sint Jans was born, it seems certain, at Leyden, and died at Haarlem. His *Deposition* and his *Story of the Remains of St John the Baptist*, in Vienna, make him the ancestor of the painters of "collective portraits", of which Hals and Rembrandt were to be the great masters. He constitutes the break between the old cycle of Flemish painting and the new, which was destined to develop the most powerful element in his work to the point of satiety—to the point where form is lost in a kind of fantasy which is sometimes too misty and full of pyrotechnical tricks—and also to disperse its energies over great spaces viewed from above, in which groups of diminutive human beings are seen running about, dancing and dying in a mob.

PORTRAIT PAINTING

Nowadays—as became clear at a recent exhibition of French 18th century portraits—people are not much interested in portrait-painting. The many means of reproduction now available have killed it, unless the model is sufficiently generalised to suggest, say, a "Lady with the Rose" or a "Man at his Work". But that is what the Flemish painters did. Before Dürer, Cranach and Holbein, and alongside Antonello da Messina and Giovanni Bellini, they possessed an acute sense of physiognomy. They examined the nature and soul of each of their models with subtle psychologist's eyes, and gave them, as backgrounds, convincing vistas of landscape between bushes and with roads leading to cities glimpsed on the horizon—or else set them quite simply in a room, surrounding them with the tools of their trade.

First place here must be given—along with the Master of Flémalle's *Portrait of a Woman* (page 48) in the London National Gallery, with the fleshy oval of the face and the ample arrangement of the planes—to that admirable effigy in red and white in the Musée Communal at Bruges, Jan van Eyck's portrait of his wife, Margarita van Eyck, with her green girdle too high up under her arms and her small hand which seems to be trying to hide under the thick stuff with its awkward folds. There is a strange quality in this work, which would be ugly if it were not obviously a boldness intended by the painter, an experiment of his imagination.

There is boldness, too, in the severe *Portrait of a Man* (page 63) in the Metropolitan Museum, classed by Fierens-Gevaert among the works of Dieric Bouts's maturity, and marking, in his opinion "the summit of his genius".

PETRUS CHRISTUS

A central instance of the human understanding characteristic of Flemish portraiture is a certain portrait of a young woman in a black velvet hat with a ribbon under her chin (page 55). The picture resembles no other, and haunts us as we consider the melting features within the oval of the subtle face. The enigmatic gaze is as strangely attractive and inescapable as those of the *Gioconda* and of the *Woman with the Pearl*, and the unusual colouring, the mystery and gentleness of the work relate it both to Fouquet and to Jan Van Eyck. Who was she? The names of Lady Talbot, Lady Grimeston and Isabelle de Bourbon, wife of Charles the Bold, have been mentioned, but the question is still unanswered. Whatever the answer, this rare effigy with the plucked brows, pale complexion and thin coral lips is unforgettable; this unknown woman leads us into the mysterious region where, between Pisanello and Vermeer, femininity dwells in all its subtle nuance and secret melancholy.

It is neither signed nor dated, but the original frame which has vanished, having been stolen, is said to have borne the inscription "Opus Petri Christophori", and it is probably by Petrus Christus. Barely twenty pictures by this painter are known. He appears to have worked in Van Eyck's studio, and is considered by Fierens-Gevaert as an exploiter of other people's discoveries. He used the signature XPI (Christi). He became a master at Bruges in 1444 and died in 1472.

Petrus Christus is important because of his full style (see for example the *Pietà* in the Louvre, painted in about 1460, and the Washington *Nativity),* the breadth of his suggestion of individuals, his feeling for continuous modelling without ridges, and the sonorous plenitude of his paint.

ROGIER VAN DER WEYDEN AND MEMLINC

At this point we must return to Rogier van der Weyden. His portraits of men are all much alike, shown in three-quarter face turned to the left, with prominent Adam's apples and with their hair falling in locks over their foreheads. Only the noses and the hands—sometimes joined over a rosary, sometimes holding a ring or grasping an arrow—distinguish them one from another.

His portraits of women are very different: they give variety to that monotonous series of bony and thoughtful gentlemen. First there is that masterpiece of modelling, the *Portrait of a Woman* in the Berlin Museum; it is neither signed nor dated, is painted on an oak panel and is strongly influenced by the Master of Flémalle. Then there is a picture in the National Gallery of Washington, of a *Portrait of a Woman* (page 59) with a red girdle: her face used to disturb our forebears with its Ethiopian lips, but enchants us nowadays by its closeness to our own conception of feminine beauty. The picture is well composed, and its value lies mainly in its monumental quality, in the subtle curve of the neck and the extremely subtle oval of the face, and in the diaphanous veil in which the light takes on rainbow colours.

This leads us on to a no less celebrated portrait, that of *Maria Moreel* (page 72) by Memlinc, which is also known as the "Sibyl of Sambetha" on account of an inscription on the scroll. It is one of those rare, perfectly successful pictures that bear the mark of timelessness: one can feel the whole of humanity concentrated in the expression of this face, which is at one and the same time attentive to the small miseries of life and open to spiritual concerns. We have all seen, and those who come after us will see, people like Maria Moreel, dressed differently yet in the same serious attitude, with slender, ringed fingers resting on a table or on a window-sill, and with thoughtful gaze, quivering nostrils and pale lips discreetly closed. The austere black and white colour scheme is broken only by the gold chain and by the jewel hanging from a red silk ribbon.

As we have said already, Memlinc excelled in portraiture: he had the gift of searching deeply into reality, —as he did, to take another example, in the Louvre *Portrait of an Old Lady,* in which the face stands out before a carefully detailed landscape. Though rather worn in places, this painting has retained its harmony of whites and greys.

Memlinc's portraits of men show more Italian elements. His *Giovanni de Candida* in the Antwerp Museum wears a Peruginesque black cap which is silhouetted against a vivid blue sky with light curling clouds and a landscape planted with small trees. The man is holding up a Roman coin, a fact which prompted Friedländer to suggest that he was a numismatist.

The *Man with his Hands Joined* in the Mauritshuis evidently formed part of a diptych of which he must have been the donor. It is understandable that some people should have been inclined to attribute this admirable portrait to Antonello, such is its precision and assurance of drawing and modelling of the face; but the features, which are as though engraved, and the pointed steeple visible in the background, leave, in my opinion, no room for doubt as to the Flemish character of this picture.

The *Martin Nieuwenhove* at Bruges is more superficial. Its primal freshness makes one think of Frans Hals.

QUENTIN MASSYS

The Flemish portraits gradually grew more Italian, or at any rate acquired something of a European family likeness, at the time when Quentin Massys was working on his Erasmus and on his portrait of Erasmus's friend Pierre Gilles. I do not care much for his *Preacher* (1514): Holbein at that time went much further in this type of painting, in spite of the vigour of the still-life of the gold pieces on the green carpet. In Massys' *Virgin and Child* the chip on the pewter dish and the vine leaves and bunch of grapes are, likewise, miniature marvels. Massys was the son of a blacksmith and was educated at Louvain. His somewhat tortuous art is often overloaded, —as also is that of Bernard van Orley, a painter nowadays much neglected, whose portrait of Margaret of Austria, Regent of the Netherlands, in a white gown and pleated wimple, has distinction.

GOSSAERT

Let us turn now to Jan Gossaert, known as Mabuse, and to his solidly constructed face of Jean Carondelet—a man who came from Dôle in Burgundy and rose to be Canon, Provost, and, in 1545, Archbishop of Palermo; in civil life he was secretary to the Emperor Charles V and, from 1526 onwards, Chancellor of Flanders. Another portrait of the same man, also by Gossaert, is known: it is more severe but less finished than the one in the Louvre, which forms part of a diptych dedicated to the Madonna: she is seen, in the other wing panel, with the Child in her arms. I love this almost monochrome face with its barely coloured lips and its blue eyes; also the joined hands and the bluish colour of his black coat. It is a work one can never see without being arrested by it, so concentrated is the presence of the man.

In his compositions Gossaert has a highly individual style. He isolates—for example in his *Danaë* in the Munich Museum and his *Madonna and Child* in

State Museum,
LUCKNOW.

the Prado—the central scene within a kind of Italian Renaissance loggia. But to return to portrait-painting: these faces by Mabuse, some of which have a pre-romantic expressiveness, together with those by Pourbus, which are colder and more objective, yet fresh and piquant, close the cycle, so to speak, of early Flemish painting, in which for the most part men and women are depicted in prayer or contemplation.

But it would be unpardonable to end without mentioning, from among the paintings for which there is no certain attribution, the small portrait, in the Tudor Wilkinson Collection, of Jeanne la Folle, Queen of Castille, which has been assigned to the Master of the Legend of the Magdalen, one of the most subtle painters of the Flemish School; or to forget the *Woman with the Rosary*—she is twenty-two and has huge eyes and a slender neck—by the Master of 1540.

All the Flemish painters, then, from Van Eyck to Breughel, were portrait painters, with the exception of Breughel himself, by whom—and the thing is rare enough to be worth stressing—not a single large scale representation of a man or of a woman is known, with the single exception of the Munich *Head of a Peasant Woman.*

STILL LIFE PAINTING

WITHOUT RELAPSING into the errors of Taine, who would have it that the Flemish painters were all either ancestors or descendants of Jordaens, frequenters of the fairs and terrific eaters, drinkers and womanisers (a view which, as we have seen, hardly fits in with the profound art and religious gravity of the so-called primitives), we have to recognise that we rarely meet with a work of theirs where our attention is not caught by the delightful way in which some accessory or other is painted. One finds in these artists, from the Master of Flémalle onwards, admirable evocations of silent life—bunches of flowers, books lying open, fountains, fruit on the window ledges: still-lifes of all kinds, which the Dutch painters of the 17th century were to take up again and bring to a sort of perfection.

We have already mentioned the accessories which adorn the tables in the interiors rendered by the Master of Flémalle, and noted the convex mirror painted by Van Eyck in the Arnolfini portrait, beneath the Gothic candelabrum. In the pictures of Rogier van der Weyden one finds mainly books and the scrolls flourished by his angels. Dieric Bouts in his *Last Supper* gives us the most admirable rendering, in subtle tone relations, of a laid table, with its dish of meat, its bread and its glasses. Another Eucharistic still life can be seen in the Louvre in a long panel attributed to a Flemish painter: beneath the carefully studied, almost too much individualised faces there is a wonderful arrangement of small loaves, knives with wooden handles, long-stemmed glasses filled with *vin rosé*, pewter dishes, an apple before the Christ, and little flowers—violets and daisies—upon the silvery cloth. Let us also recall the bunches of irises and columbines in the Portinari alterpiece and the bread and wine on the table in Gerard David's *Marriage at Cana* (page 64).

It is, therefore, not surprising that, as a forerunner of the still-life painters of Rubens's time, and not long before Breughel, who was himself also a great still-life painter, there should suddenly have arisen a painter of market scenes and village life, by name Pieter Aertsen, a Dutchman. He was born in 1508, lived and became a master at Antwerp, and died there in 1575.

In his *Butcher's Shop* at the University of Upsala, and his *Greengrocer's Shop* in the Van Beuningen Collection, Aertsen displays a great freshness and liveliness of colour and an attractive quality of paint in his rendering of the fruit, meat and vegetables. But what is peculiar to him is that he does not give to his piquant still-lifes the sole importance in his pictures: in the backgrounds, through gaps, we catch sight of the women making their purchases.

Lastly we must mention, in the Louvre, a *Farmyard on a Winter Morning*, in which the gates and their timber work are treated as still-lifes: it is by Cornelis van Dalem (before 1535 to about 1573) and shows, by its bold composition, the double influence of Aertsen and the Elder Breughel. Another picture by Van Dalem, the *Landscape with Shepherds* (page 75), in the Prado, leads us to that art in which nature itself becomes the theme.

LANDSCAPE PAINTING

THOSE PRECURSORS OF FOUQUET, the Limbourg brothers, had already bequeathed to him, in the paintings they did for the Books of Hours, that fair fresh light which Flemish art was to develop to a truly incomparable degree. For while, since Giotto, the Italians had made landscape the accompaniment to their compositions, the Flemish painters understood it as an individual element, either opening as a window into their pictures of interiors, or forming beneath the sky a detailed background which supports the primary scene. In their work nature and architecture are harmoniously associated. We have seen, in Van Eyck, how important landscape is to the Ghent polyptych, how it makes the picture breathe and contrives large, simple, green planes between the groups of people. But already in about 1430 the Master of Flémalle had placed in the background of his religious scenes views of cities and of lakes, and of hills traversed by roads which the eye follows with delight. In Van der Weyden landscape is more austere, more spare; but it takes on its full importance in Bouts, who places his architectural settings, his rocks and his distances with a visionary's understanding. Then we have remarked how the landscapes of Hugo van der Goes are already more concentrated in masses in the Italian manner, how those of Gerard David are sculptural and those of Geertgen tot Sint Jans pantheistic.

PATENIER

Prepared for by all these Masters, landscape-painting found a rare artist in Joachim Patenier, a painter who was born in 1480 at Bouvigne, near Dinant, and may have worked in the studio of Gerard David. No more than five signed paintings of his are known.

This meditative master is unparalleled in his power of absorbing the parable of some Biblical episode or the meditation of St Anthony into a natural scene in which he makes us completely forget the picture's dimensions through the amplitude of what it suggests. We have before us space painted, time and space rendered sensible to our eyes. What Callot was later to achieve in his peopled microcosm, Patenier does with ravines, bushes, mountains and skies: he leads us deliciously on and away.

Consider, in his *Saint Jerome* in the Louvre, those bluish vistas fading so beautifully into the distance under wide white skies. The painter has an exquisite way of sketching in tiny people, farms and groups of houses, or of leaving some animal—a goat or a bird—straying among the slaty blue of his rocks.

Another picture by Patenier one of the few that bear his signature, is the *Temptation of St Anthony* (page 76) in the Prado, where there is also to be seen that strange picture of Hell—a wide seascape, with Charon's barque crossing an estuary to ferry one of the damned to a ruined tower from which there rise flames and lamentations (page 77).

Certain other Flemish pictures, such as the extraordinary rendering of *Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane* by Mabuse in the Berlin Museum, draw very close to German Art and to the nocturnes of Schöngauer and Baldung; and in Lucas van Leyde's *Daughters of Lot* it is as though all the resources of the pyrotechnic art were expending themselves in rockets and showers of sparks beneath the moon while, behind the turbid scene of the incest, like a sinking vessel, the city of Sodom is engulfed in ruin.

But this is to digress from Patenier, whose acute sense of nature is developed to an astonishing degree. He is the precursor of the German painter Elsheimer, of the Antwerp painter Bril who was born three-quarters of a century after him, and finally of Claude Gellée. There is in Patenier, at it were, an anticipation of Pascal's idea: " by space the universe comprehends me and engulfs me as a point; by thought I comprehend it ".

DE MOMPER AND BREUGHEL

This conception, which consists in making each painted landscape into a cosmic entity, is to be found again, later, in Sosse de Momper (Antwerp, 1554—1665), in whose work the landscapes, with their peculiar tone of green, extend right across his panels, which are generally horizontal. By this important painter, whose profound originality will one day have to be recognised, I have seen two admirable landscapes in the Warsaw Museum, one of them with a mill in the foreground, setting off a huge luminous vista of a land and sky in which there is already something of the later Breughel's incisive spirit and tormented topography.

Breughel himself was to be the great renderer of Alpine landscape and of the movement of the seasons. But with him we are on a new page: Flemish painting has completed its first cycle, during which it was occupied with the expression of a higher reality, of a lofty religious and mystical meditation. From now on, under the impulse of humanism and of deductive reasoning, which is its corollary, scepticism was to arise and, with it, doubt, curiosity and the calling of everything into question.

THE DIABOLIC ELEMENT

THAT WORLD OF SULPHUR and fire, of faces whose expressiveness is sometimes pushed to the point of ugliness, and of a sudden malignancy shown in the creation of some composite creature, both zoomorphic and anthropomorphic—a world scarcely seen till now except in the gargoyles of Gothic buildings, whose function was to pour away, outside the church, from under the hoods of evil monks with beaks and claws, the overflow of sin and filth—that latest child of human imagination, the *monster*, now takes shape and finds a place in painting.

With it the doors fly open, and the world of horror now rises at the very centre of reality, which has become a virgin forest where everything is spike and thorn and burr. The doors open upon the exploration of the senses and upon the wildest Sabbaths of the distorted imagination: upon terrible scenes where the images of good and evil, theologically separate but humanly united, are to find embodiment, along with the temptation of the saints and the mysteries of love between angel and demon, and with the leer of irony—a new character in the drama, one that will spoil everything by destroying equilibrium and so favouring fear, doubt and destructiveness.

Then, by a tendency of things to right themselves, as though the humanity of Flemish painting had become conscious that it was losing in the imaginary its appetite for the real, we see it returning to common sense, to proverbial wisdom, to the natural rhythm of the seasons and to renderings of crowds of people spread out over great spaces: a strong and healthy life finally triumphs over that phantasmagoric world after its orgy, and once more there is a sustained harmony of the impulsive and outspoken with that which has weight, form and contour.

HIERONYMUS BOSCH

The caustic spirit already apparent in Melchior Broederlam's diptych turns to malignancy in the painting of Bosch, a man who was open to the ideas of magic and those visions to which late medieval theology had given birth in men's minds. It gives to his *Adoration of the Shepherds* in the Prado a strange expressiveness, in which doubt, knowledge and faith seem to be already united in the colour, drawing and plastic totality of the picture. It contains, certainly, an allusion to the things that were being said *sotto voce* in the ecclesiastical disputes and councils of the time; but this acute cristicism of the theological allegory which imperceptibly becomes moral allegory (and so acquires this ambiguous character) is not confined to the rendering of the people who encircle the Divine Child and, as in Breughel's treatment of the same subject in the London National Gallery, throw him into relief by their irony, the irony of reasoners satisfied with their reasoning: it also finds its subtle way even into the distances of those exact, meticulous, almost hard, extraordinarily truthful landscapes, to which, however, it adds a kind of mystery, a well kept secret.

This, I think, is the sort of thing that needs to be borne in mind as we look at these pictures, in which the dream world sometimes takes on an unaccustomed solidity. Hieronymus Bosch thrills with a sinister shudder; he flirts with the Devil; and we shall see him accentuating this tendency more and more until his *The Crowning with Thorns* (page 80) in the London National Gallery, a late work, nearly loses itself in the exaggerated hideousness of the brutes who are tormenting Christ.

Born in the district of Bois-le-Duc, that crossroads of several languages and several cultures, Jerome van Aken (Aachen or Aix-la-Chapelle), who signed himself Hieronymus Bosch, displays that caustic and scoffing quality which arose in Europe towards the end of the 15th century and became characteristic of the Reformers and of the men who were active at that time in and around Rotterdam, Augsbourg and Basle. His portrait in the Arras collection shows us how he looked at the age of sixty or seventy: it is, as Paul Fierens says, "the modelled, resolute face of a subtle observer, of the most pitiless of ironists".

In the *Crucifixion* of the Franchomme Collection at Brussels, a picture attributed to Bosch by Max Friedländer as an early work, the influence of Rogier is still apparent: the only features already characteristic of Bosch are the subtly expressive Christ and the landscape opening out on to the secrets of space and time. The whole of the work of Bosch is more or less influenced by the spirit of the Mystery Plays, which in his lifetime were acted in the parishes during Holy Week. The actors in them were not afraid of overacting, and Conway was right in remarking that the art of Bosch, as he grew older, moved further and further in the direction of complexity, oddness and caricature.

The Bois-le-Duc painter sums up the medieval spirit in its decline. The allegories of religion are sifted by a critical attention which, tired of glozing over the morals of the monks and churchmen, inspects them with a strictness proportional to their long increasing laxity. Bosch is a last reminder of that civilisation in which, as Schürmayer puts it, "every bourgeois, every peasant and every child knew his Heaven and his Hell as well as he knew his own room". It is as though, in this painter, the old ideas, before being effaced by the pitiless lights of logic and Renaissance humanism, were indulging in a final phantasmagoria in which humanity contracts and hardens between the earthly Paradise and the Last Judgment.

The genius of Bosch, compact both of observation and of visionary imagination, has also a pious picture-book side to it: but all this is suggested in visions which for the most part sweep across the panel in well conceived and well composed lines and planes.

The *Hay-Wain* (pages 84, 85) in the Prado, which is thought to be one of his first works, shows, when its wings are closed, the returning Prodigal being barked at by the dog at his own home. The two pictures emphasise the passing of life, the journeying of all existence—the great on horseback, the lovers and poets on straw (but they are high up on top the stacked hay, safe from the wheels which are crushing the laggards and the hesitant), while human slaves, harnessed to the pole of the wagon beside the beasts and lashed by the whip, draw it painfully forwards.

The *Hay-Wain* is no doubt inspired by those words of the prophet Isaiah: " All flesh is grass and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field ". It clothes what is a satire on the general life of the artist's time in topical allusions: it is surely Cesare Borgia who is to be seen there, riding on a white horse. And much has been written about the lovers who, hidden up there among the stacked hay, are busy embracing, enjoying a kind of morning serenade between angels and demons; but with such images, as with those of Arthur Rimbaud in his *Saison en Enfer,* the attempt to find their key brings us no nearer an understanding of the work. In the presence of Bosch's painting it is wise to let one's eyes wander about, to dream and to submit to its enticements, which draw us on between sea and sky towards the dangerous ground of hypothesis and voyages: we find ourselves embarked on time's galley, on the human galley which was later to be represented, in the Louvre picture, as the *Ship of Fools.* In the *Hay-Wain,* which is also a " praise of folly ", the painter uses an unprecedented and tingling range of colours. Those budding rose pinks, those morning or evening blues, suggest overwhelmingly the fragility of the things of this world. In front of the misty blue of a distance watered with rivers and flanked with mountains the long procession goes its way, like the long unfolding of time before us, broken by the groups of people, each with some sudden outburst of red or vivid yellow, and in the foreground by symbolic figures suggesting fertility, suffering or greed.

This picture, though centainly less often reproduced than the *Garden of Delights* (page 83), is characteristic of that apocalyptic style which found in Bosch its painter and iconographer (and his style, like that of St Jerome himself, is rich in mysterious allusions which belong to a sometimes very complicated symbolism). The Eden scene is, perhaps, in all painting, the most vivid suggestion of the Fall. The Hell towards which the wagon is moving—and into which everything would plunge if Christ were not there, dominating the horizon of men, with His arms stretched out in a wide gesture of forgiveness—has the darkness of a torture scene in the Spanish manner (and let us not forget that the Spaniards were the great clients of this Flemish painter).

Probably before the *Hay-Wain* (there is a great shortage of information on the chronology of his works), Bosch painted the *Temptation of St Anthony* which is in the Lisbon Museum. The subject was a perfect one for his genius, which " turns nightmare into fireworks " and mingles moral intentions and theological dogmas inextricably. Flaubert in his turn was to draw near the same fantastic world nearly four centuries later, and to say, speaking of the same saint: " Then a great shadow, more subtle than any natural shadow, and festooned along its edges with other shadows, became visible on the ground. It was the Devil, leaning upon the roof of the shed and bearing beneath his two wings, like some giant bat suckling its young, the Seven Capital Sins, whose contorted faces could just be seen peeping through."

Encounters with the Apocalypse are, as we have seen, frequent in Bosch, and we meet also its author, whom he depicts on Patmos, seated on a rock and waiting for the dictation from on high. The profile of St John—as the Devil with a harpoon and the Angel hearkening to the Virgin divide his thoughts—stands out against a huge landscape of green fields, waters and far-away cities. This picture is on one side of an oak panel which shows, on its other side, eight scenes from the Passion grouped around the pelican, symbol of the Saviour's sacrifice, feeding its young with its blood.

The *Garden of Delights* is apocalyptic in its remoteness from the monumental simplicity of Genesis: in it everything the human imagination has ever conceived by way misshapen constructions and erotico-acrobatic human postures moves before our eyes about the Fountain of Youth: they almost suggest automata and seem as though they were a premonition of the inventions of surrealism. It is not surprising that André Breton should have written, in *L'Art Magique,* a striking commentary on this picture: "Externally, its subject is the sensual pleasures, treated with a perfect fusion of lewdness and near-obscenity—as in the giant mussels—with delicacy—as in the woman gazing with enchantment at the head of her man which has changed into a mulberry. Beneath a collective mask, the Satanic owl, there is a group dancing. Others are sleeping, or wandering full of tenderness under the trees, or shut up inside dewdrops on the end of a giant thistle. The ruler over this dream atmosphere is the Orphic Egg, the principle of metamorphosis. Apart from the group of birds massed on the pond, with their unforgettable gaze and giant wings, the only living creatures in the Garden are naked human beings and highly oriental animals for them to ride; shells, whorls, strawberries and raspberries, cylinders of crystal running through a coral mountain, and precious stones ripening to burst and force the soil upwards, form transparent hats veiling the couples and fill the place with budding and iridescence."

Bosch contrived to endow his painting with a peculiar spirit which seems to be the forerunner of what, in our own time, has been called by Gaston Bachelard "the psychology of material things": there is in his work, surely, a sort of crystallisation of medieval alchemy, with its fantasy extended to include flora and mineralogy.

One can feel that, from the first, Bosch had a passion for sleight of hand. I think he must have been like those seekers after symbols who see in everything an essential truth which has to be guessed at by reading between the lines. This mystic in the direct line from Ruysbroek contructed gradually: seen at a distance, his forms draw together and appear close-knit, but from close to—and this is striking in photographic enlargements—the technique has an astounding freedom.

All this explains why this artist has acquired a redoubled importance in our time. People have seen in him the archetype of the painter of our atomic era, yet with essential difference that, for us, physical analysis and the rediscovery of mystery in statistics of probability belong to an order altogether opposed to that which, in the 16th century, was engaged in reacting against the obscurantism of the end of the Middle Ages.

It is none the less true that Hieronymus Bosch was to some extent the precursor of the great humanist of Rotterdam, with his vision of the ship of death through which everyone passes as in the *danses macabres.* "With me," says Charon, "there is no such thing as privilege! Monarchs and cardinals take their turn at the oar, along with the humble people."

Bosch died two years before the *Colloquin* were published, but he resembled Erasmus in his taste for satire, for caustic comment and for liberty. For the painter, like the writer, there was a kind of desert hermitage, shell or asylum: "Poets, astrologers and other artists when they are meditating something that is great and above the vulgar are accustomed to seek retreat." Both of them showed also what amounted to a disgust for scholasticism, then in decline, —a disgust which they appear to have shared at that time with a young monk called Luther, who ended by forcing the Scriptures to fit his own private experience.

With Bosch, it is true, there is a great difference, since his art is that of a visionary. His unforgettable images, his obsessions, his great landscape vistas and his profound psychological hints combine to show mankind lost in the labyrinthine immensity of the world, in which all roads and encounters are so many problems confronting his spirit. And so, though rejecting the excesses into which the great visionary fell towards the end of his life (excess of outspokenness, excess of caricature to the point of hideousness), one loves Bosch the "*fayseur de diables*", and one finds all the more power in him when he is least illustrative and hides his secret under the banality of ordinary things.

PIETER BREUGHEL THE ELDER

Born a good ten years after the death of Bosch and very different from him, although he inspired his early works, another and no less important painter was to close the first cycle of Flemish painting. The first book of *Pantagruel* had already been out for twenty-seven years when Pieter Breughel, the artist whose spirit is so close to Rabelais, with the same hearty laugh, completed the *Flemish Proverbs* (1559). He was the earliest of a whole series of painters called Breughel, whence his nickname the Elder with its misleading suggestion of a white beard. He was born in about 1525–30 at the village of Brögel in the Campine, and died in 1569, but he made up for his short life by his output, for he produced masses of engravings, drawings and paintings, many of which are unforgettable.

Breughel lived at the moment when the Flemish were "discovering" Italy. The sketches and drawings which he brought back from his Italian journey, and those depicting mountain landscape seen, no doubt, during his crossing of the Alps (the Louvre drawings among others), are magnificent works which the painter used later for the landscapes in his paintings.

Forerunner of the Naturists, Breughel brought a huge material and spiritual appetite to the sensible world, —and though he pretended to look at it from the outside only, let us not forget that Breughel was, according to his contemporaries, one of the most cultivated artists of his time. It is perhaps true to say that his belief in the goodness of nature was as inexhaustible as Gargantua's. In his famous engravings Breughel reminds us that the big fish eat the little, that man is gnawed at by capital sins and that justice is relative; but there is in him such an instinctive admiration for what nature achieves, that we are drawn irresistibly into the vast spaces in which the painter places his scenes—which are usually rather small groups of children, dancers, hunters or drinkers, unless, darkening the picture, he shows us Death triumphant.

This "*maître drôle*" is a great theatrical director. No one is better at the art of suggesting all the various phases of an action. No one is better at enticing the spectator's eye towards distant mist-blue or snow-covered landscapes. No one is better at passing from gaiety to gravity, from the hearty jollity of a popular dance to the melancholy of the tomb. But one feels in him, above all, a solid and wonderful trust in life: that turf trodden down by the troops on campaign will grow again; that dead man will live in his descendants; that ruined town will be rebuilt, and on the hillside the magpie will settle and chirp upon the disused gibbet.

All this, expressed in lively clear-cut colours, shining like children's toys, makes Breughel at great master of the art of living and believing in life, a man to whom art was an enchantment.

Breughel began by working for Jerome Cock at Antwerp at the series of engravings whose fantasy has been so well described by Joris-Karl Huysmans: "There are frogs in paroxysms of laughter, unlacing their bellies and letting out eggs; and impossible mammals protrude pikes' throats and dance a jig on shin bones fitted into water melons. In his prints of the *Deadly Sins* the wild fantasy is even more accentuated: boars are scurrying about on turnip legs and wagging tails interwoven with roots and twigs; bodiless human faces roll about on the end of a lobster claw which serves them as an arm; birds whose opening beaks are mussel shells and whose tails are eel-tails hop about on a pair of hands, with their heads lowered, running along like wheelbarrows. It is a gathering of hybrid creatures, vegetable and masculine, a union of tools and cripples."

Breughel knew the land. No later painter has given us so impressive a picture of summer. We share the thirst of his harvesters in front of the ochre wall of the corn, and all our accumulated thirst seems to drink with them out of their leather bottle.

Breughel is one of the artists in whom knowledge and life have reached the most harmonious equilibrium. Perhaps the picture that sums up and expresses this duality most fully is his *Fall of Icarus* in the Brussels Museum. There one sees the overconfident poet, still wearing the wings that have borne him to a considerable height, but now hurtling out of the sky, doomed by the force of gravity which reasserts its mastery in his final disastrous fall, while below, weighed down by his whole reality, and indifferent to all these follies, the peasant guides his plough, watches the clods as they detach themselves, and reckons how much his work is likely to bring in.

Towards 1563 Breugel abandoned for some years comedy and allegories taken from ordinary life, and began to show his dark side. His *Triumph of Death* (page 88) is a kind of synthesis, summing up, as though in a final vision, the earlier themes of the dialogues between three dead and three living men and those of the *danses macabres:* themes which had been familiar to Dominicans and Franciscans in the preceding centuries and which, in a time of deep inequality between lord and villein, recalled the equality of all men on the threshold of the life eternal.

For some years the painter was continually haunted by the themes of the Old and New Testaments. After a first rendering of the Tower of Babel, which he placed in the midst of a great tumult, among din and haste and the coming and going of loaded barges, with groups of men at work on each of its stories, Breughel took up again a contrast already suggested, as we have seen, in his *Adoration of the Kings* and began work on his *Christ carrying the Cross.* This picture, though they are not the least bit alike in technique or composition, is related to Tintoretto's great *Crucifixion* in the amplitude of its conception, its dramatic atmosphere and its striking vision of the scene. Consider how clearly, by synoptic renderings of groups, Breughel suggests, in this picture of the carrying of the cross, the different phases of the sacred drama: it is as though, in this picture, the whole of the journey to Calvary is being shown to us, from the first stumble to the raising of the cross between the crosses of the two thieves, —about which, in the distance, the crowd is already making a ring, while in the foreground on a knoll, though not in the presence of the cross, the Virgin, St John and St Mary Magdalene are standing in the attitude of the *Stabat Mater.* The painter has also finally contrived to add to the general scene the grievous procession of those who, before or after Christ, have been or will be condemned by human justice. As in every one of his paintings, but here with particular explicitness, the great Flemish painter leads us on, sequence by sequence, to take part in the tremendous action. His was the gift for the procession, for the cavalcade. His rhythmic comings and goings were placed before backgrounds of immense expanses of forest, hills, mountains and sea. Breughel was an animator of crowds. Long before the cinema, he laid open to effective vision huge spaces peopled by moving multitudes.

In 1565, after his *Flight into Egypt* in the Seilern Collection, there came the moment which some have called the "classic period" of this great undisciplined master. First there was the *Census at Bethlehem* 1566 and then the *Massacre of the Innocents* (page 89). Then, preceding the *Land of Cochaigne*, came the *The Conversion of St. Paul* 1567 (page 92) with its troops engaging in a rocky defile among pine trees: in it he used his memories of his journey across the Alps (probably by the St Gothard). In this picture, consciously or unconsciously, he shows himself a disciple of Uccello. Next came the *Blind Men* in the Naples Museum 1568, the last dated picture by the great renderer of space an humanity.

In all this output, not one portrait! Not even a nude—except *La Luxure*, the drawing in the Royal Library at Brussels. Breughel was drawn to village bawdy rather than to eroticism. His strokes have a biting outspokenness. In him we have the greatest painter of laughter and, without question, the finest product of peasant humanism.

Among his last works there stand out two reminders of the world of deformity, his *Dulle Griet* 1564 in the Musée Van der Berg at Antwerp and his *Magpie on the Gibbet* 1568.

The *Dulle Griet* marks a return to the spirit of Bosch and to the vein of the engravings which Breughel did in his youth. In it he is letting loose his demons and putting them to flight before Wild Margot and her company of evil women, "worse than Hell". But unquestionably there were other works of his in the same spirit—the ones that had remained in his studio and were destroyed: Van Mander relates that, before his death, and to prevent his wife from getting into trouble, Breugel made her destroy the satiric compositions which he had painted. One example of these remains to us, the *Beggars* in the Louvre, with their reference to the evil and miserable policy of Philip II and of his Minister, Cardinal de Granvelle, Governor of the Netherlands.

The *Magpie on the Gibbet* takes its place, side by side with the *Four Seasons* of Nicolas Poussin, as a masterpiece of panoramic painting. The hill with its gibbet, on which the perched magpie forms the centre of the picture, the vista into the far distance with its rivers and rocky spurs, the peasants coming up from the surrounding farms and dancing between the trees (for it is a holiday), the rendering of the leaves, the leaf mould in the undergrowth and the immensity of the sky—all these create a reality that attains enchantment.

But in all Breughel's work, among the paintings in which his extraordinary gift of synthesis is evident, there is none that I would place higher than the *Hunters in the Snow* in the Vienna Museum, unquestionably the finest winter in all painting. It was part of the series of the *Months* for which the painter received the order in 1565. When I see this rendering of January, I never tire of marvelling at the way in which, in front of that landscape of snow and ice with its multiple planes arranged in space, the painter contrived to throw the whole scene back, even to the mountains whose peaks rise in the distance, by means of a great black bird. What is this bird? A jackdaw? Under the grey leafless trees one can almost hear the babble of the women busily roasting grain in front of the inn, and the deadened footsteps of the hunters as they return to the village, followed by their pack. It is one of those days of leaden sky, when there is no sun and no time, and the children after school go skating instead of doing their homework, and the snow covers everything with an unusual silence.

Breughel was the great master of epic painting. In this he was the precursor of the Rubens of the great Kermesse pictures and the great hunting scenes set against deep receding landscapes. Nowadays, no doubt, we feel somewhat remote from this manner of "opening out space"; but, while Breughel was incontestably, with Tintoretto, the precursor of the painters of crowds in movement, he was also the one who, in his time, contrived to avoid the abuse of illustration. Painting was to him a pretext for infinite variations in which, as though retrospectively, the great phases of time's movement are made visible to us; for Breughel was above all the painter of the passing, of the changing, and had the power of fixing it in space. He thus brought Flemish art to the moment of its rarest flowering.

PLATES

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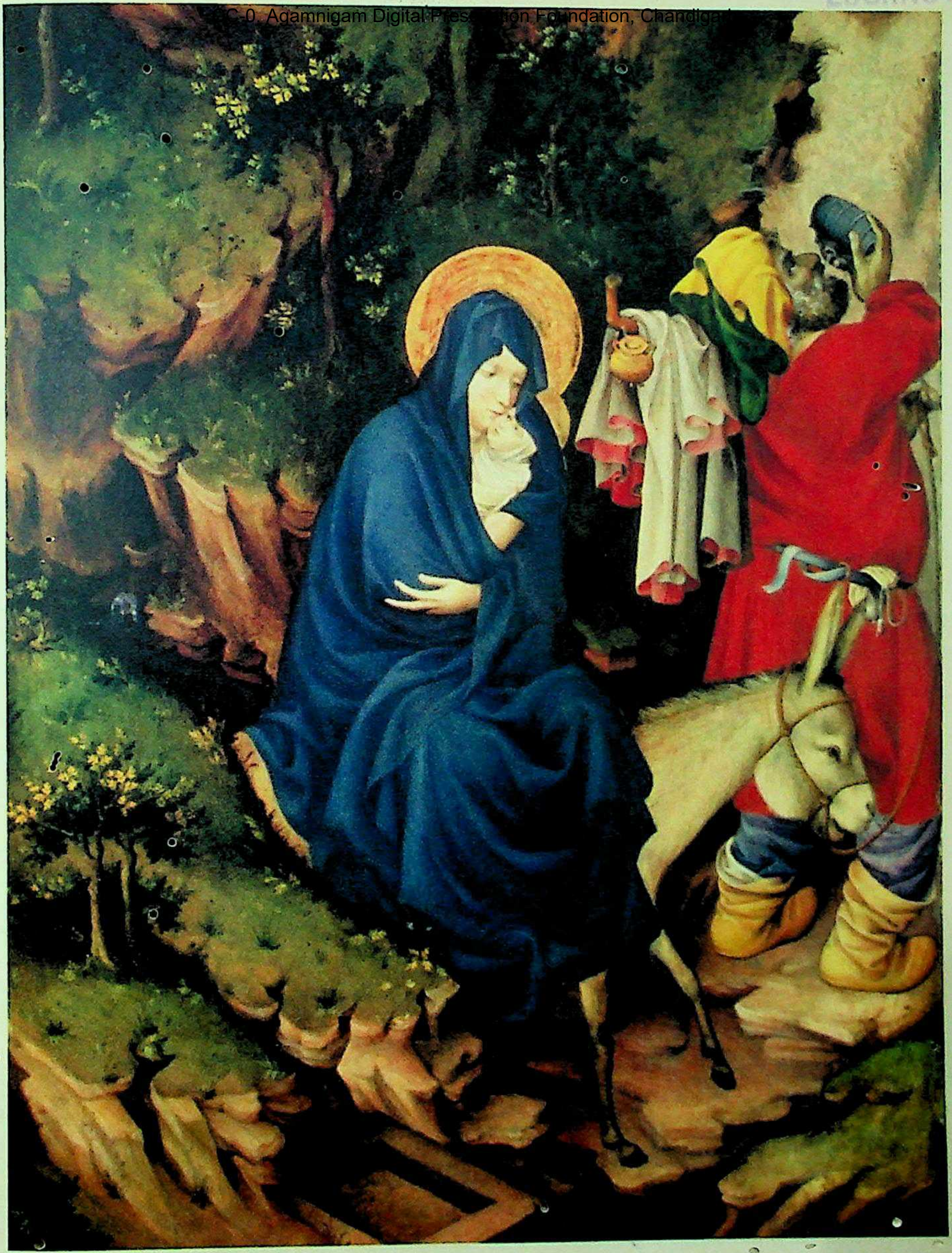
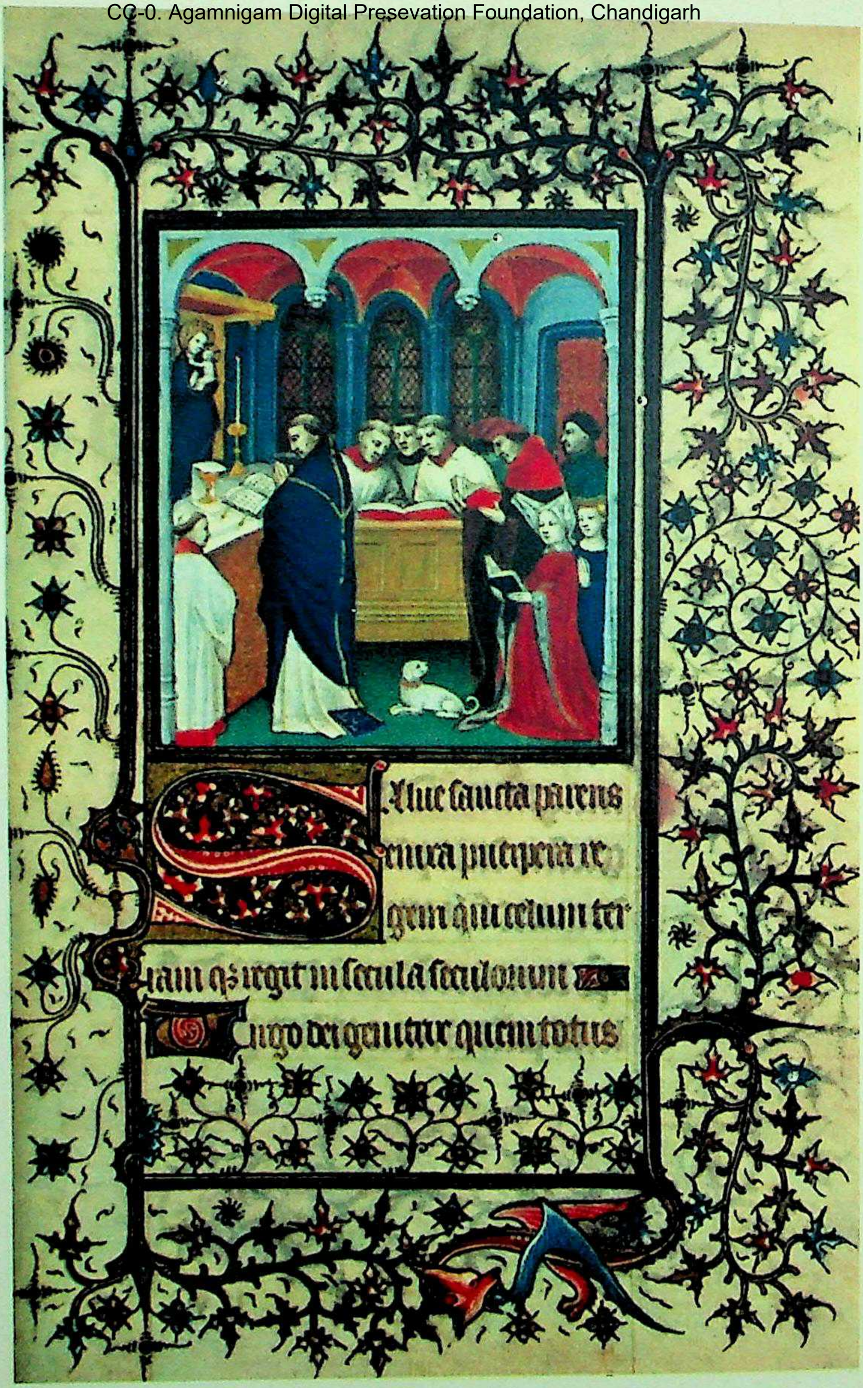


MELCHIOR BROEDERLAM

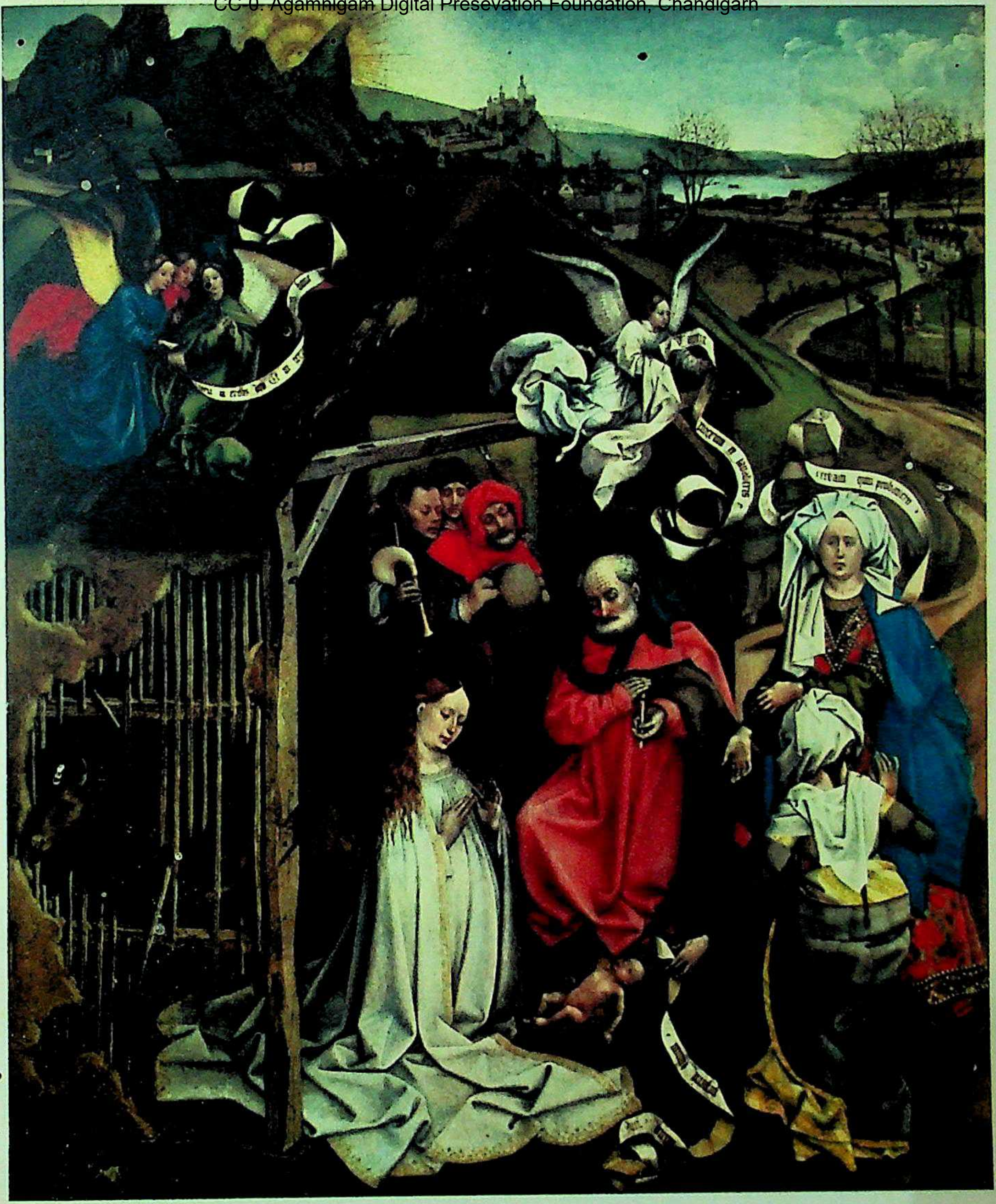
The Flight into Egypt. Detail from a wing of an altarpiece 1398
Musée, Dijon


Salue sancta parens
enixa puerpera re
gem qui celum ter
ram qui regit in secula seculorum
Virgo dei genitrix quem totius

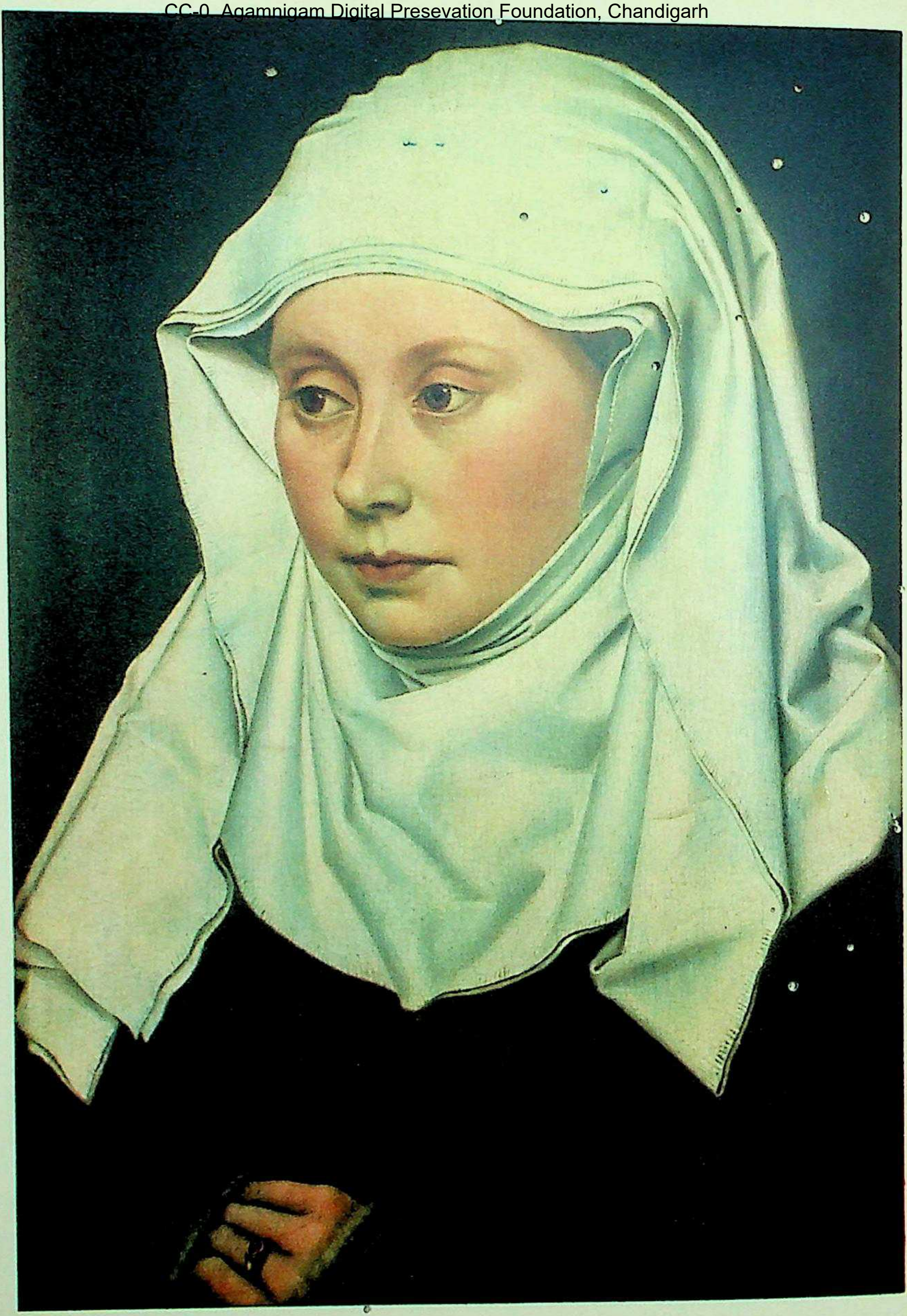
MASTER OF THE 'HEURES DU MARÉCHAL DE BOUCICAUT'

LADY AT MASS. Detail from the 'Heures à l'Usage de Paris' c. 1410–15

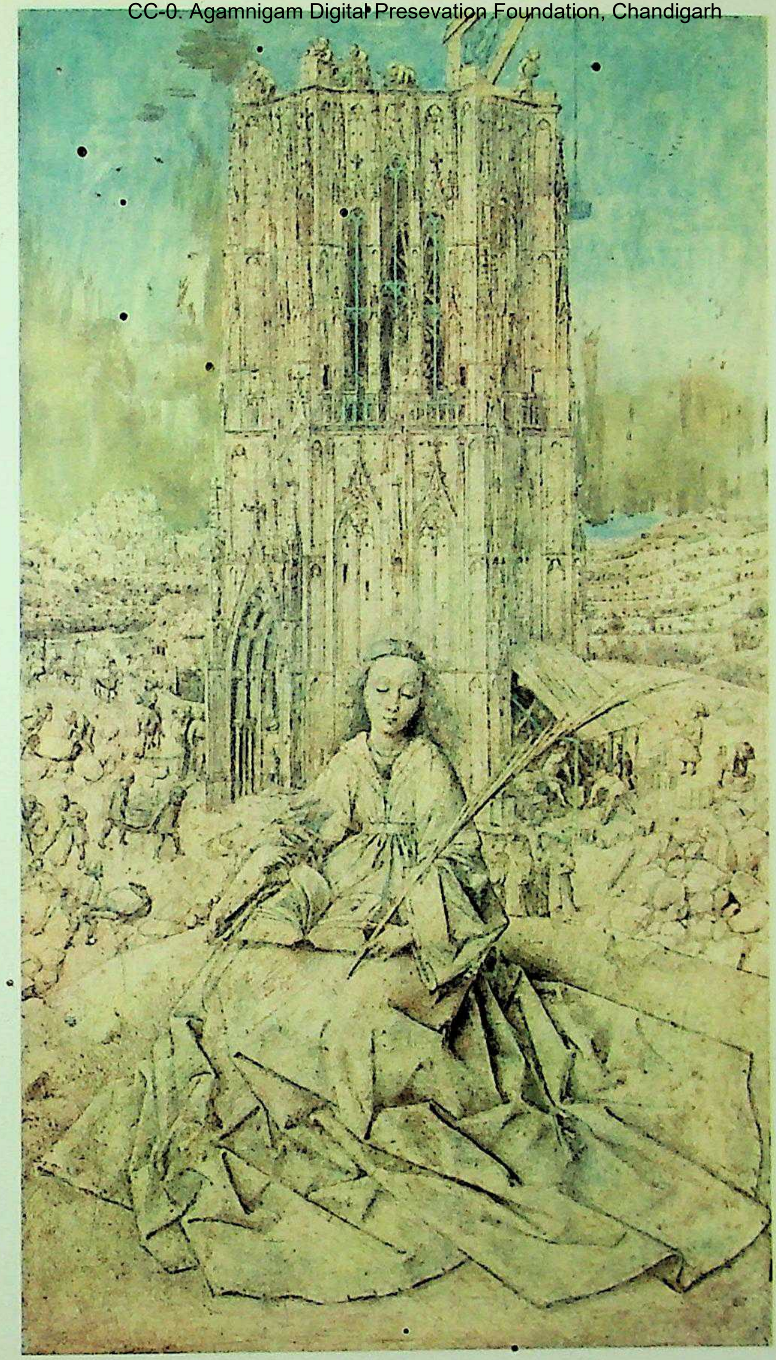
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris



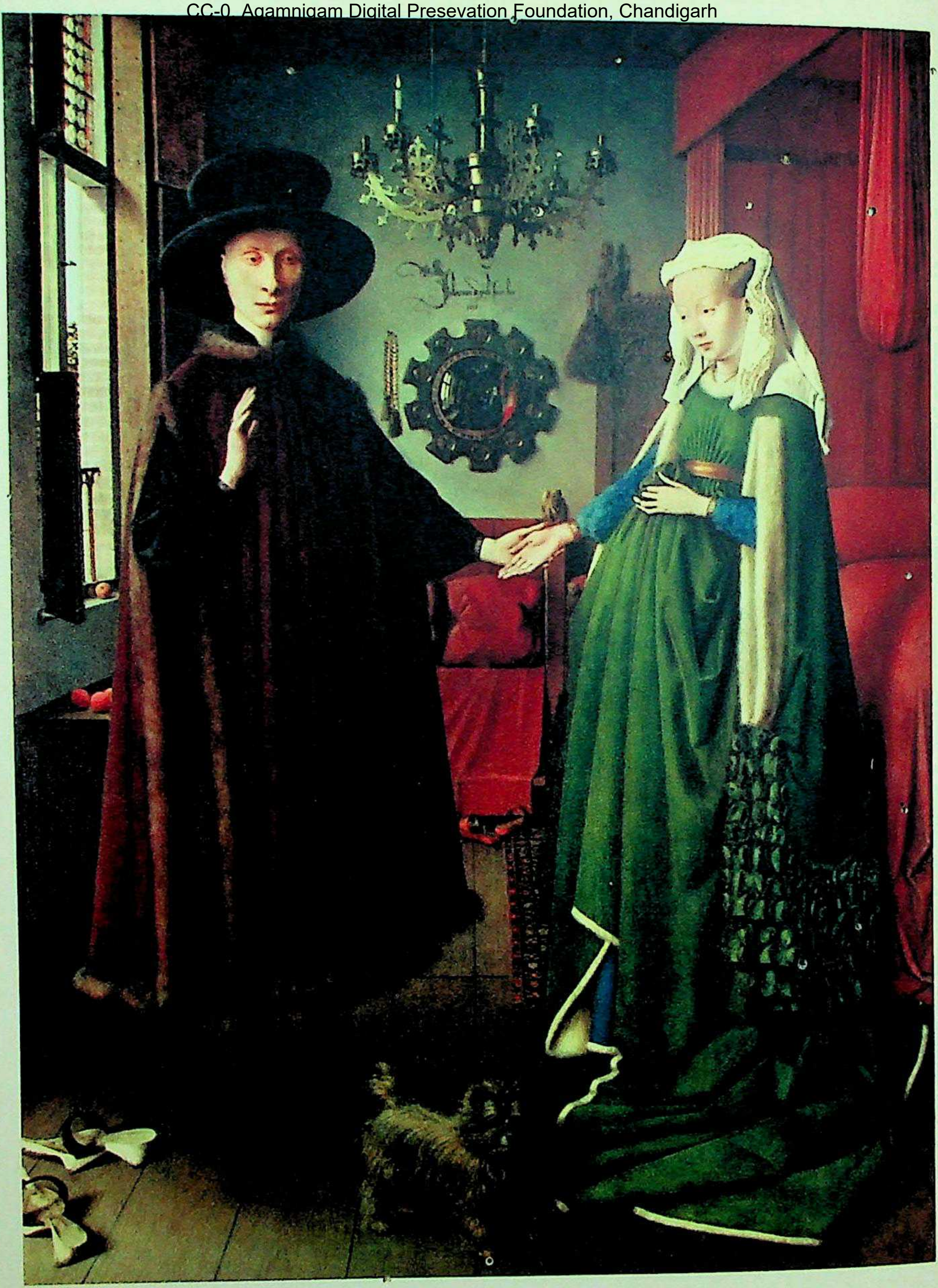
MASTER OF FLÉMALLE
THE NATIVITY 1425
Musée, Dijon



MASTER OF FLÉMALLE
PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN c. 1430–5
National Gallery, London



JAN VAN EYCK
St Barbara 1434
Musée Royal, Antwerp



JAN VAN EYCK

THE MARRIAGE OF GIOVANNI ARNOLFINI AND GIOVANNA CENAMI 1434

National Gallery, London

State Museum,
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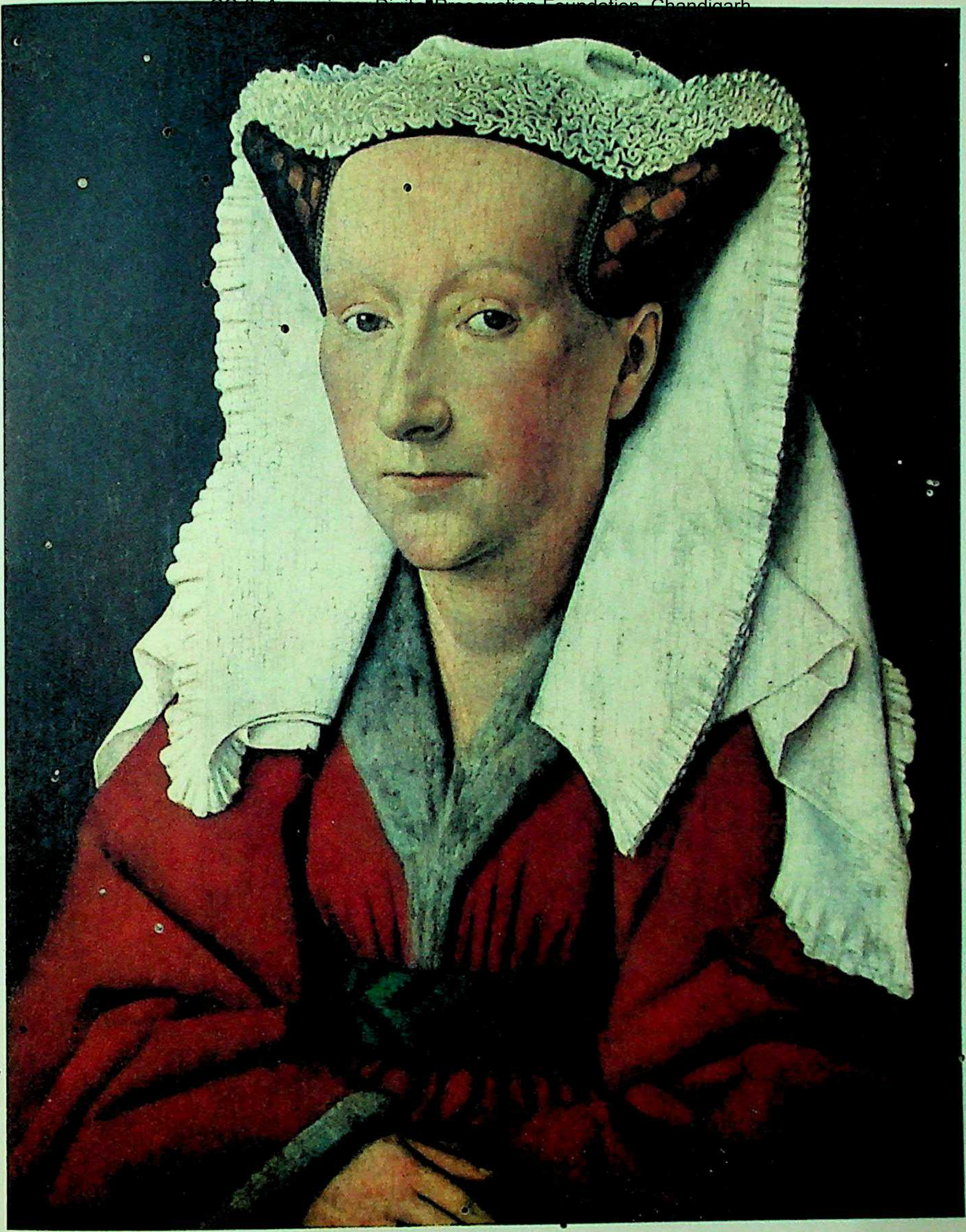
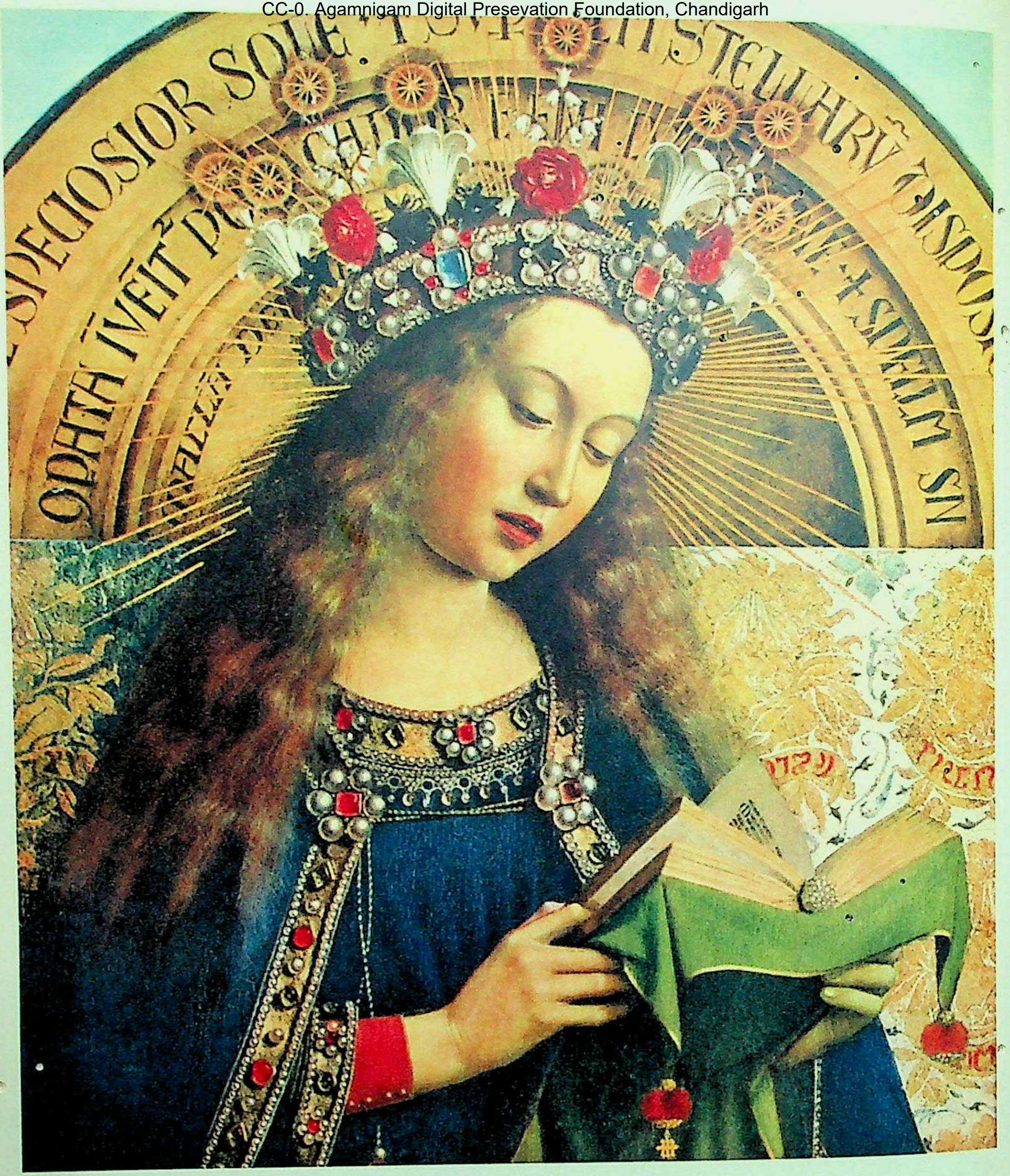
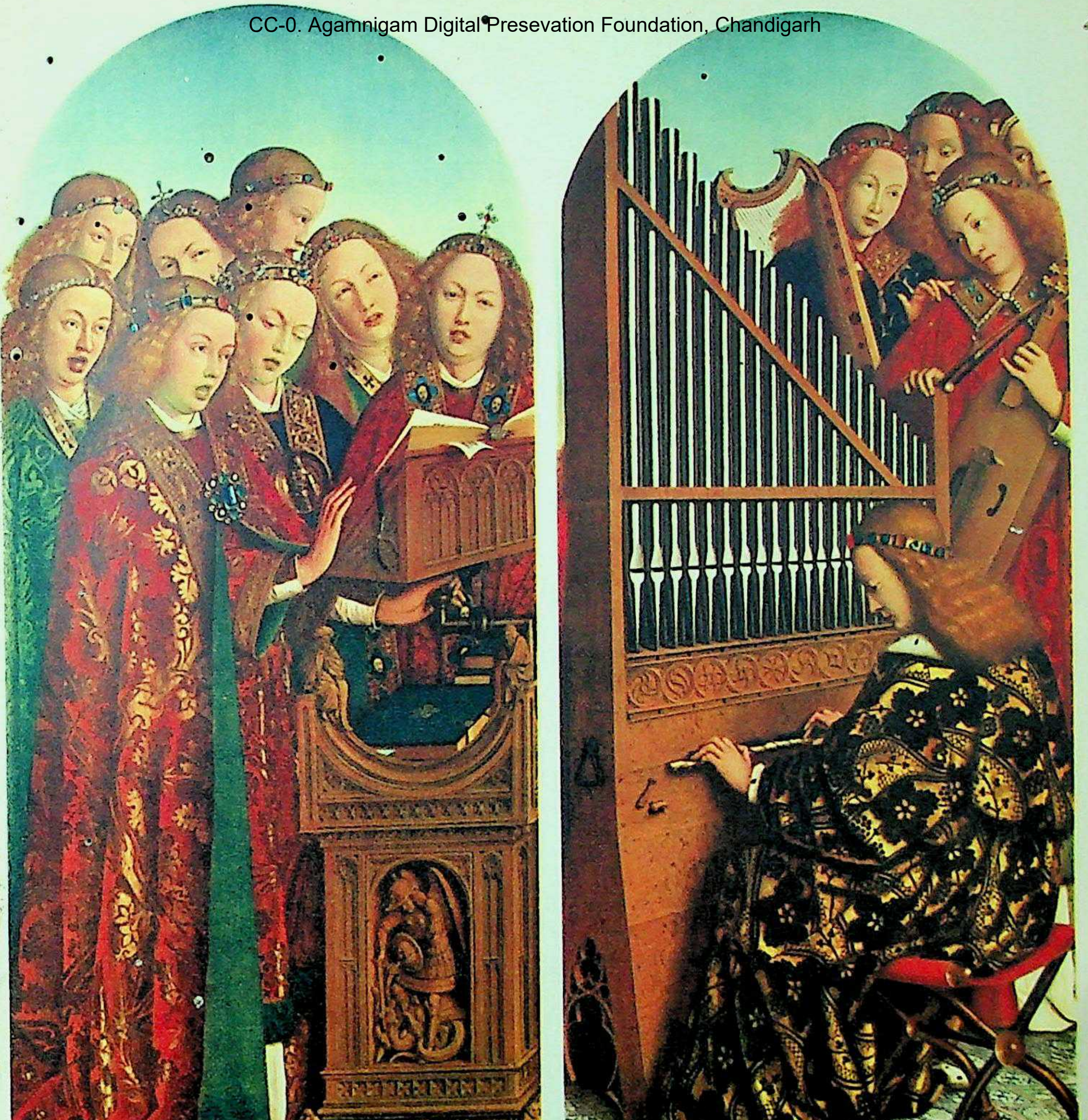


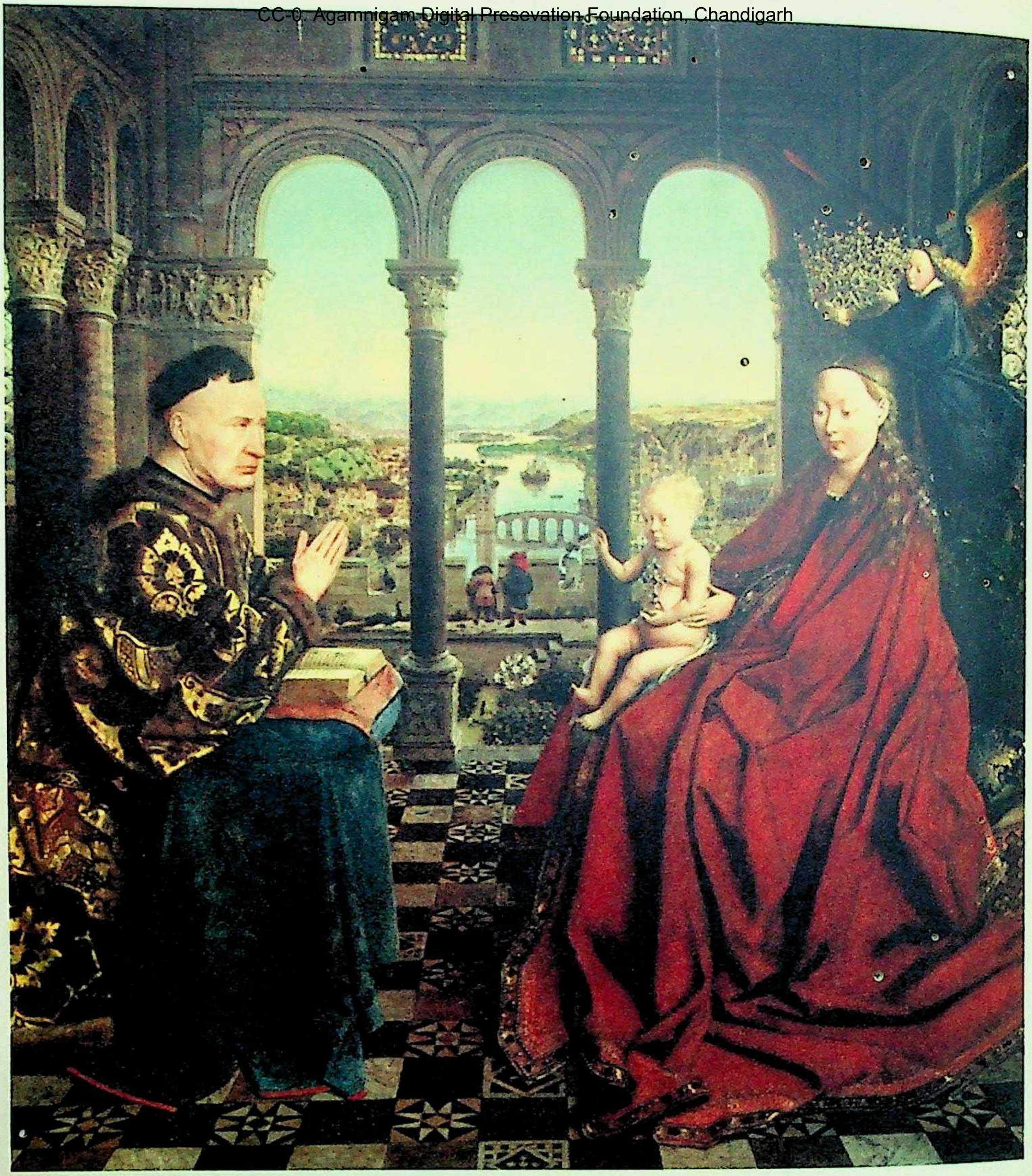
JAN VAN EYCK
PORTRAIT OF MARGARET VAN EYCK 1434
Musée Communal, Bruges



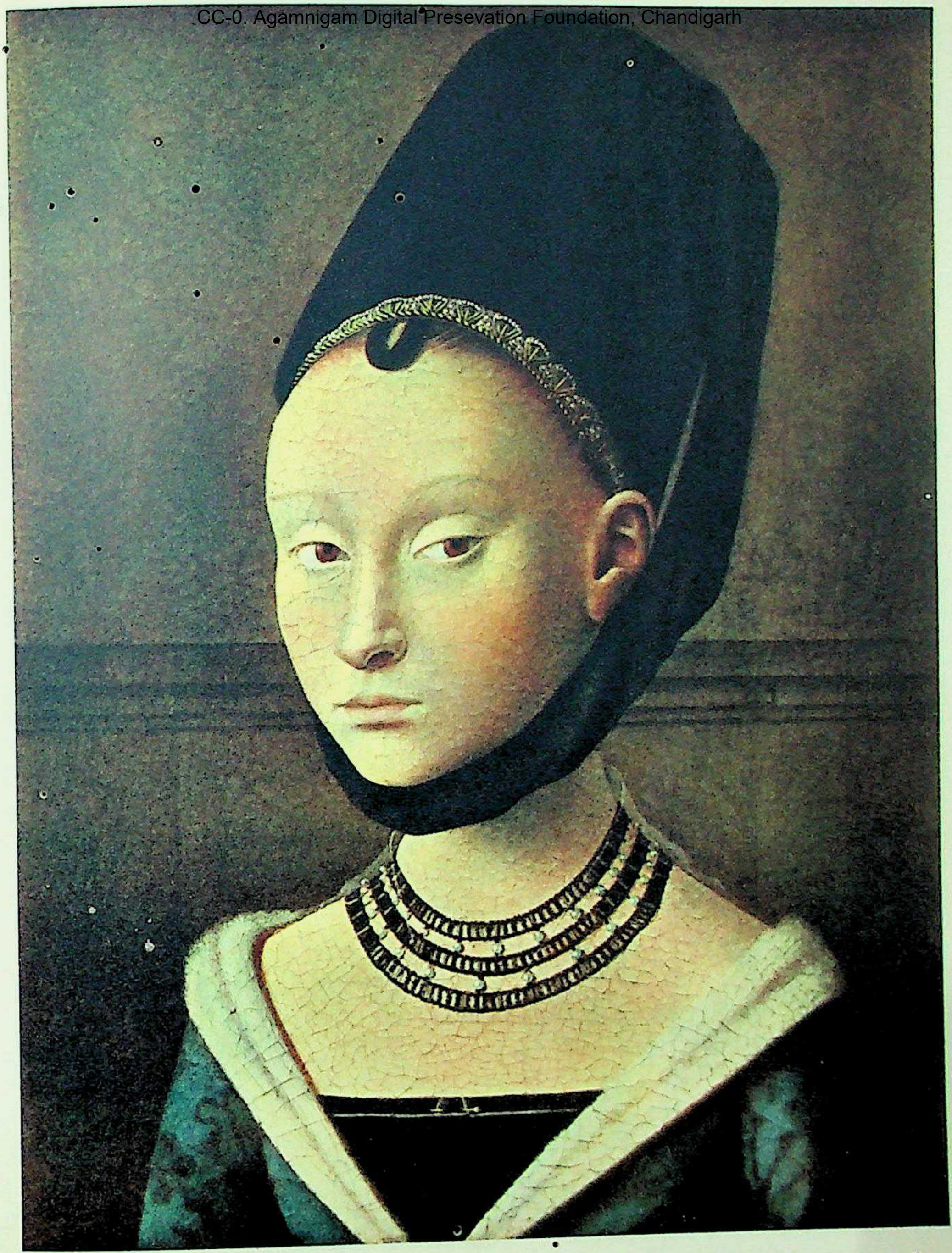
JAN VAN EYCK
THE GHENT ALTARPIECE 1430–2
Central Panel (Detail): THE VIRGIN'S FACE
St Bavon, Ghent



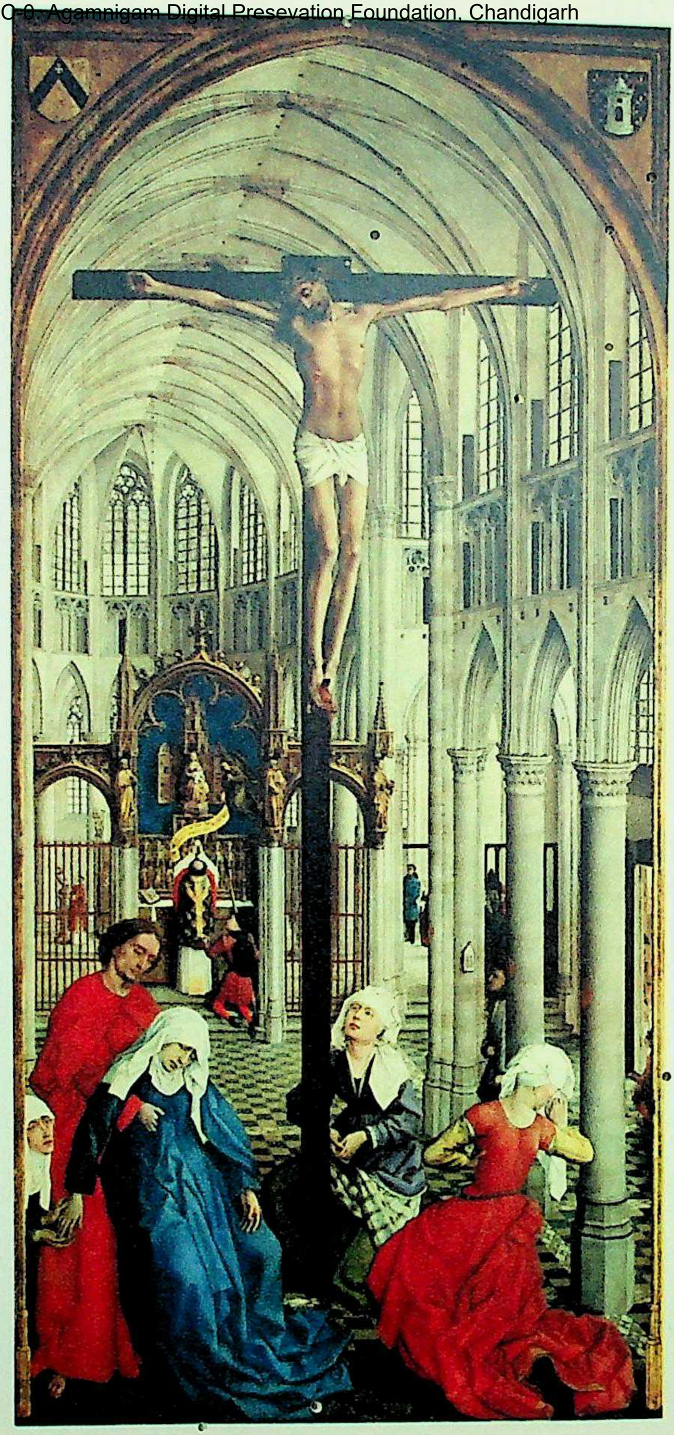
JAN VAN EYCK
The Ghent Altarpiece 1430–2
Left Wing: Angels Singing Right Wing: Angels making Music
St Bavon, Ghent



JAN VAN EYCK
THE VIRGIN AND CHANCELLOR ROLIN c. 1436
Louvre, Paris



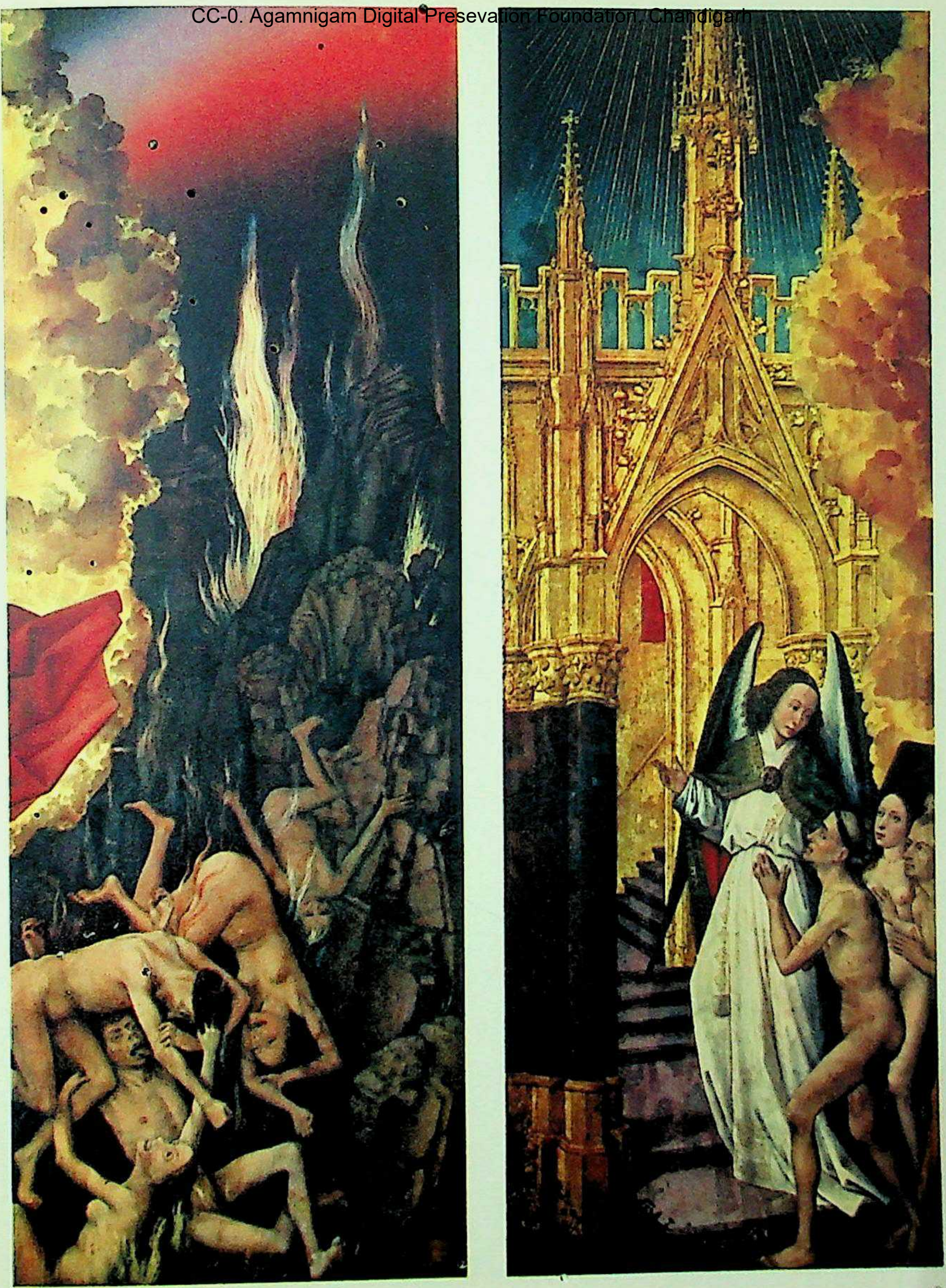
PETRUS CHRISTUS
Portrait of a Young Woman After 1446
Staatliche Museen, Berlin-Dahlem



ROGIER VAN DER WEYDEN

The Sacraments · Central Part: The Crucifixion in a Church c. 1445

Musée Royal, Antwerp



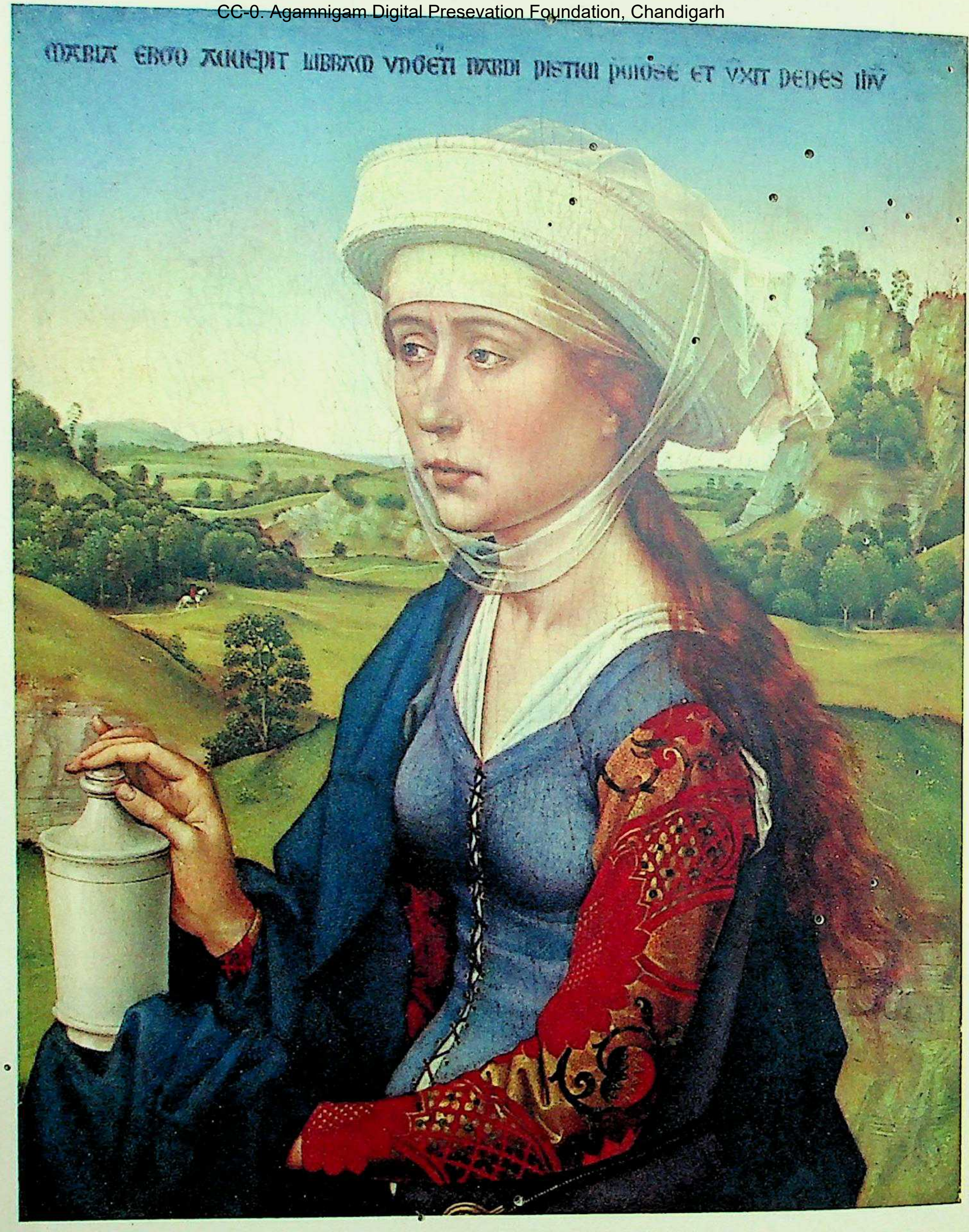
ROGIER VAN DER WEYDEN

The Beaune Altarpiece

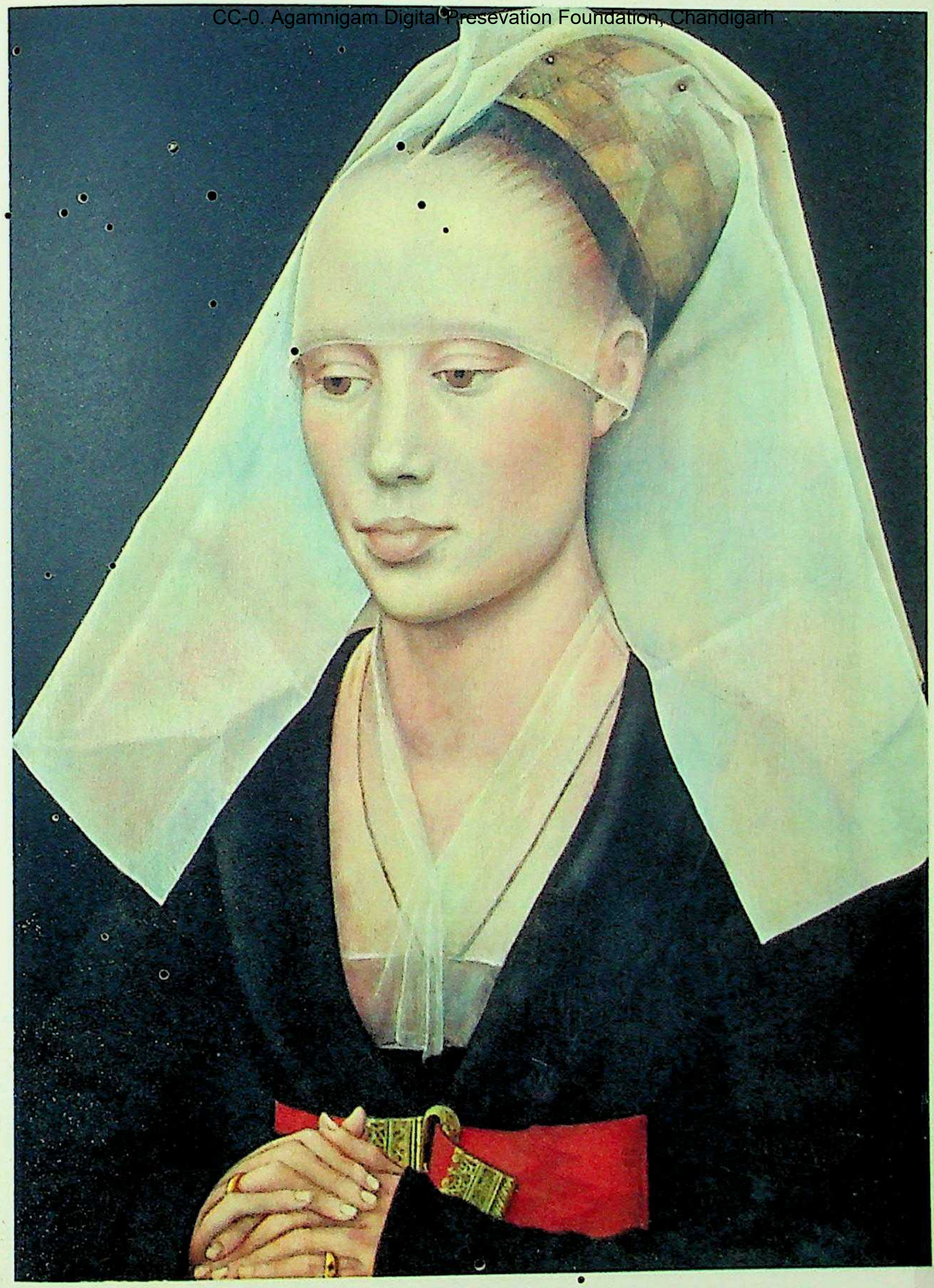
Right Wing: The Damned

Left Wing: The Blessed.

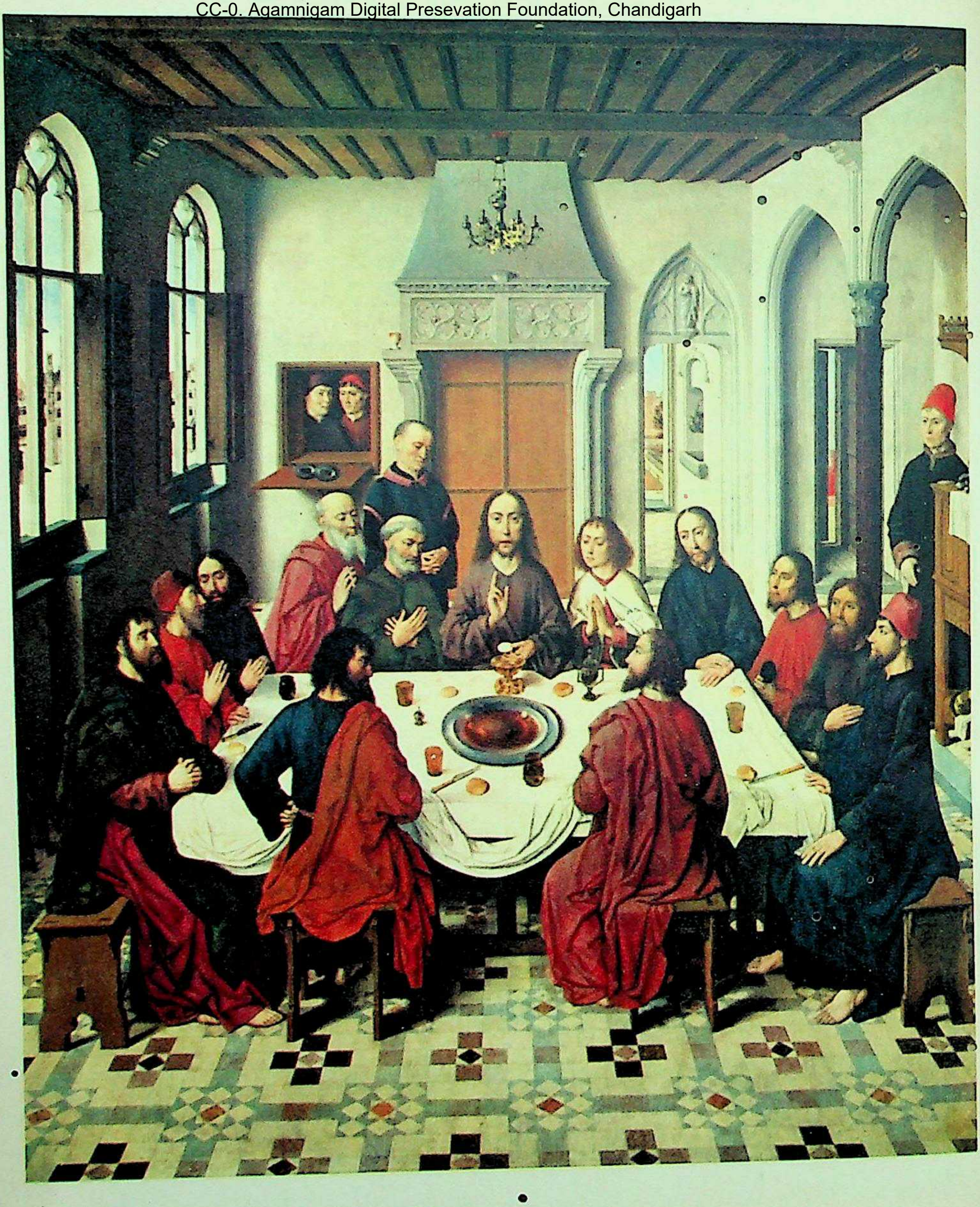
Hôtel-Dieu, Beaune


MARIA ERGO ACCEPIT LIBRAM VNGETI NARDI PISTICI PRECIOSE ET VXIT PEDES IHV

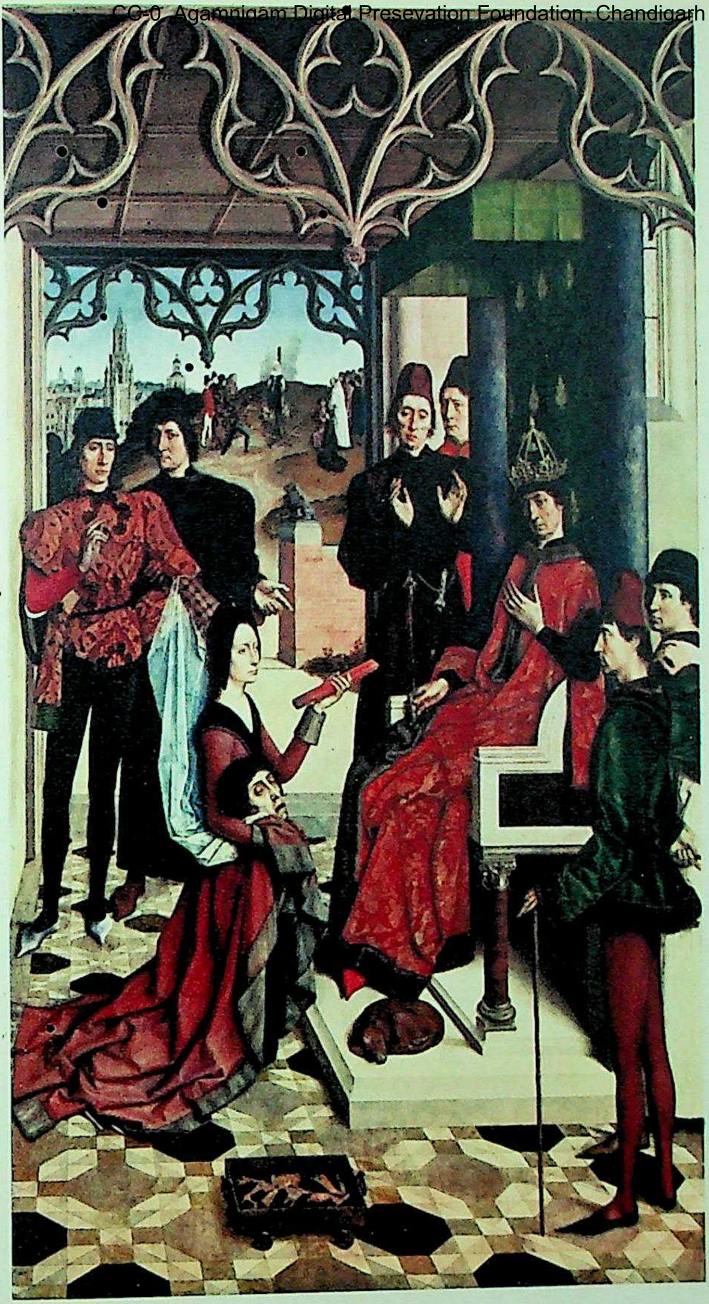
ROGIER VAN DER WEYDEN
THE BRAQUE TRIPTYCH Right Wing: ST MARY MAGDALENE c. 1450
Louvre, Paris



ROGIER VAN DER WEYDEN
PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN c. 1435
National Gallery of Art, Washington



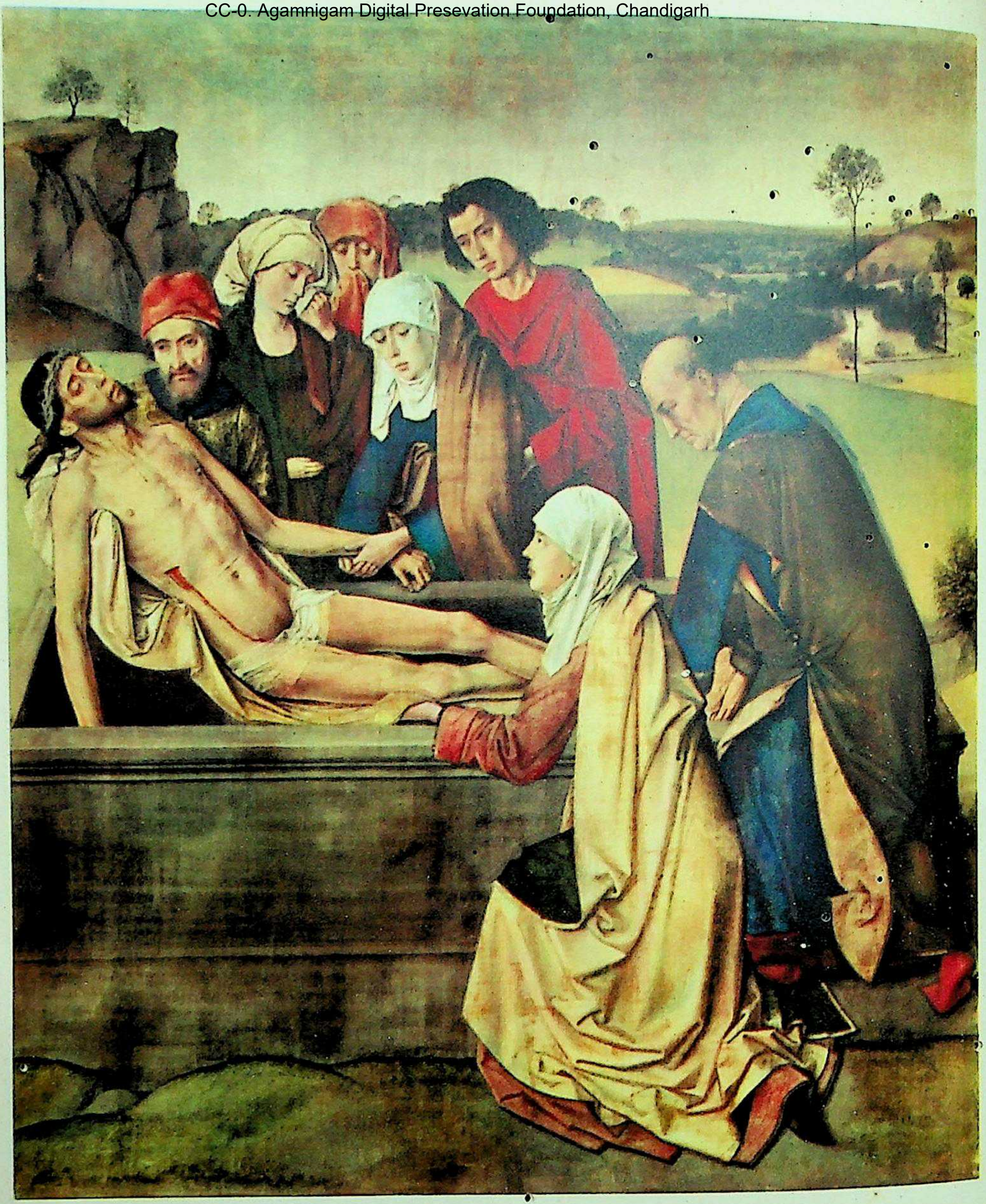
DIERIC BOUTS
THE ALTARPIECE OF THE SACRAMENT
Central Panel: THE LAST SUPPER 1464–7
St Pierre, Louvain



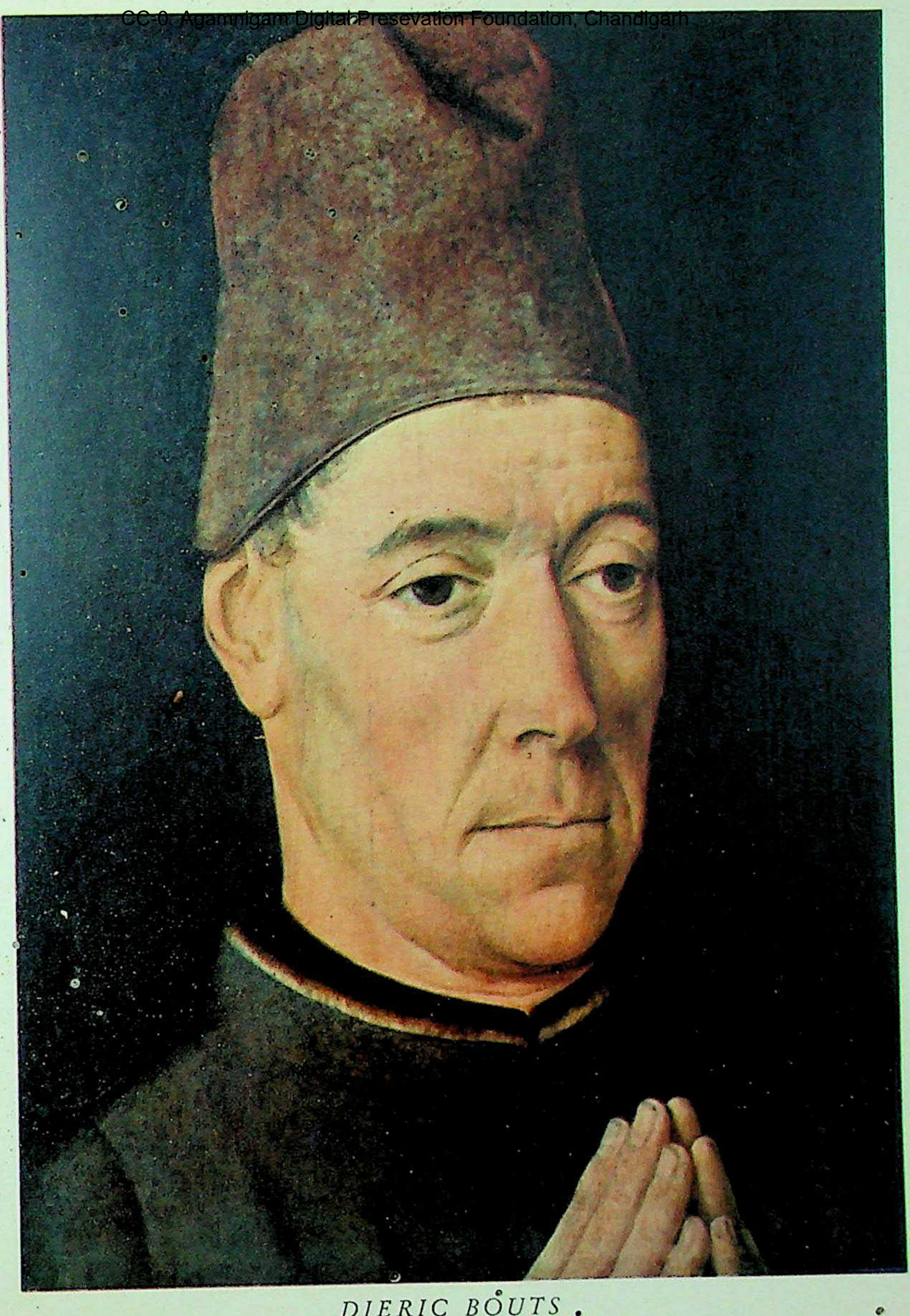
DIERIC BOUTS

The Justice of Emperor Otto: The Ordeal by Fire 1470–5

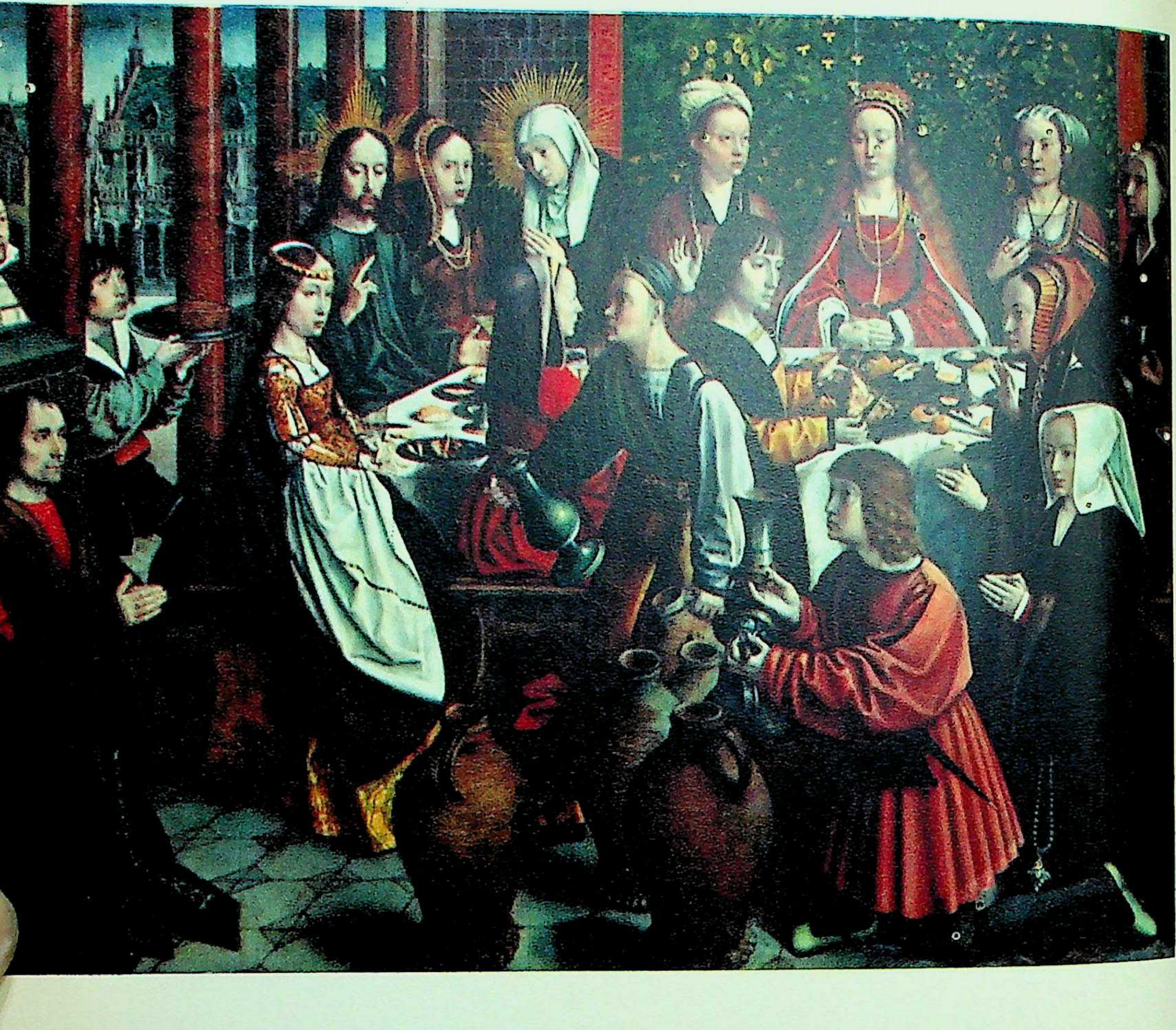
Musées Royaux, Brussels



DIERIC BOUTS
THE ENTOMBMENT
National Gallery, London



DIERIC BOUTS
PORTRAIT OF A MAN c. 1460–70
Metropolitan Museum, New York



GERARD DAVID
The Marriage of Cana c. 1500–10
Louvre, Paris

State Museum,
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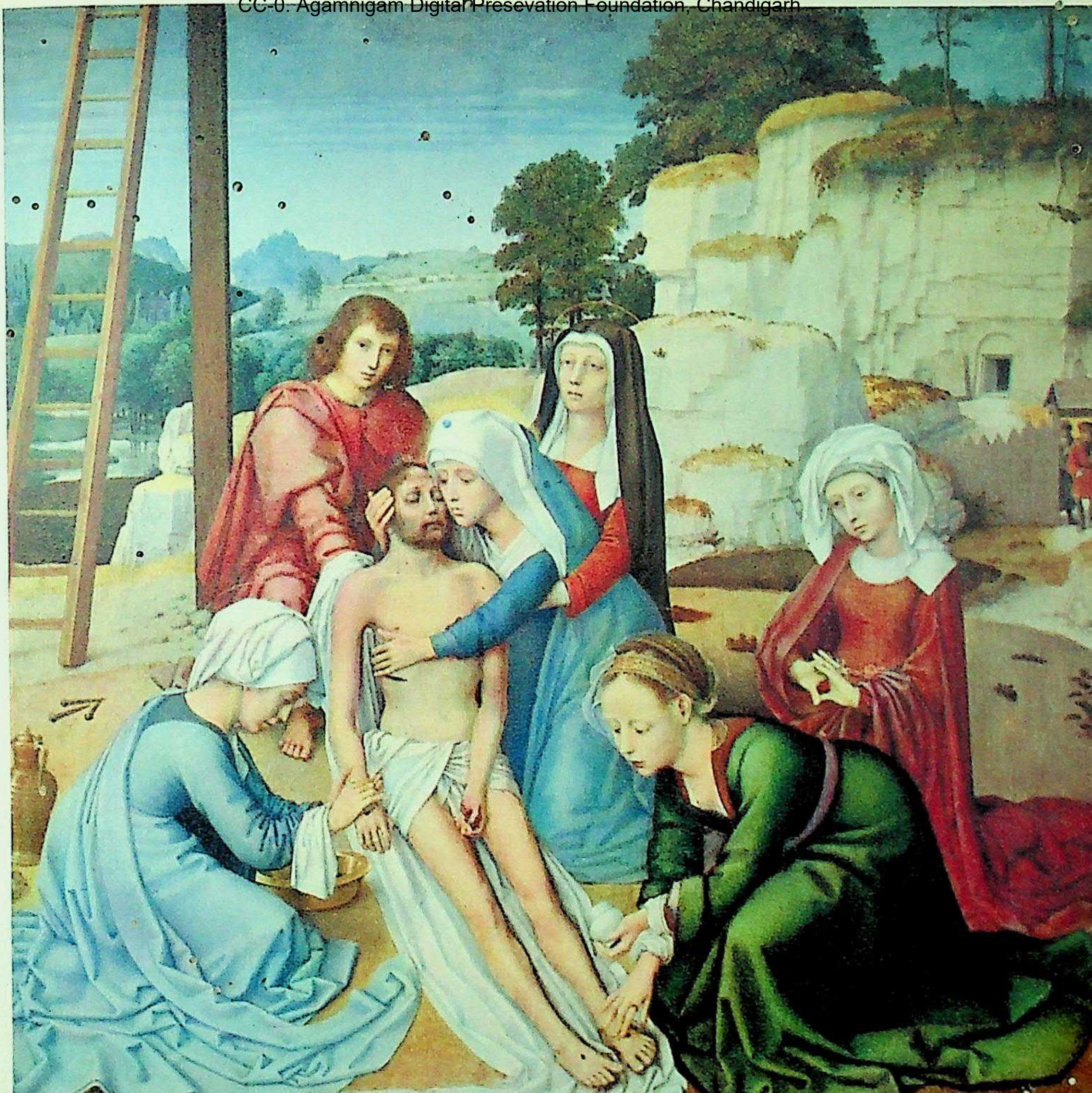
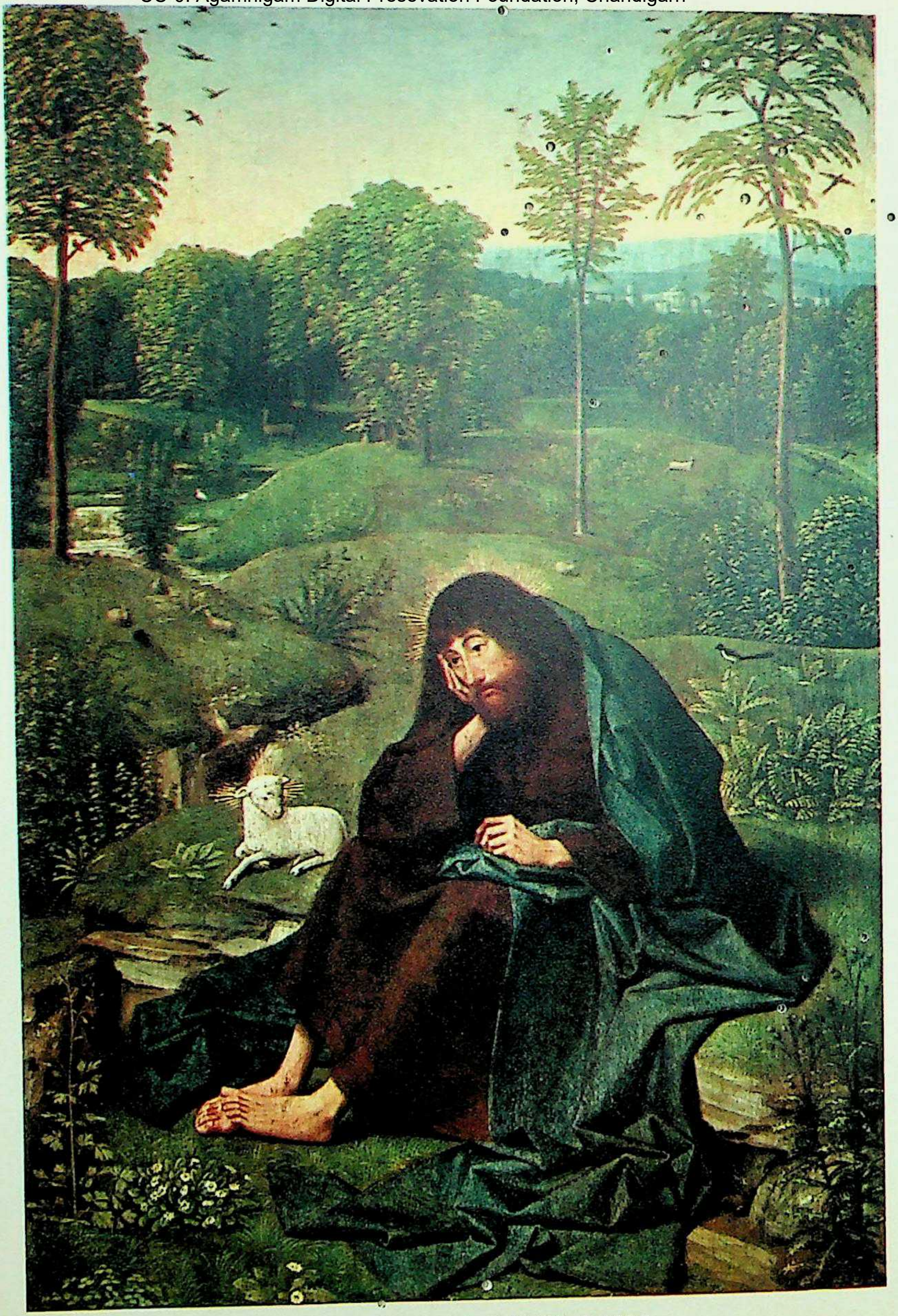
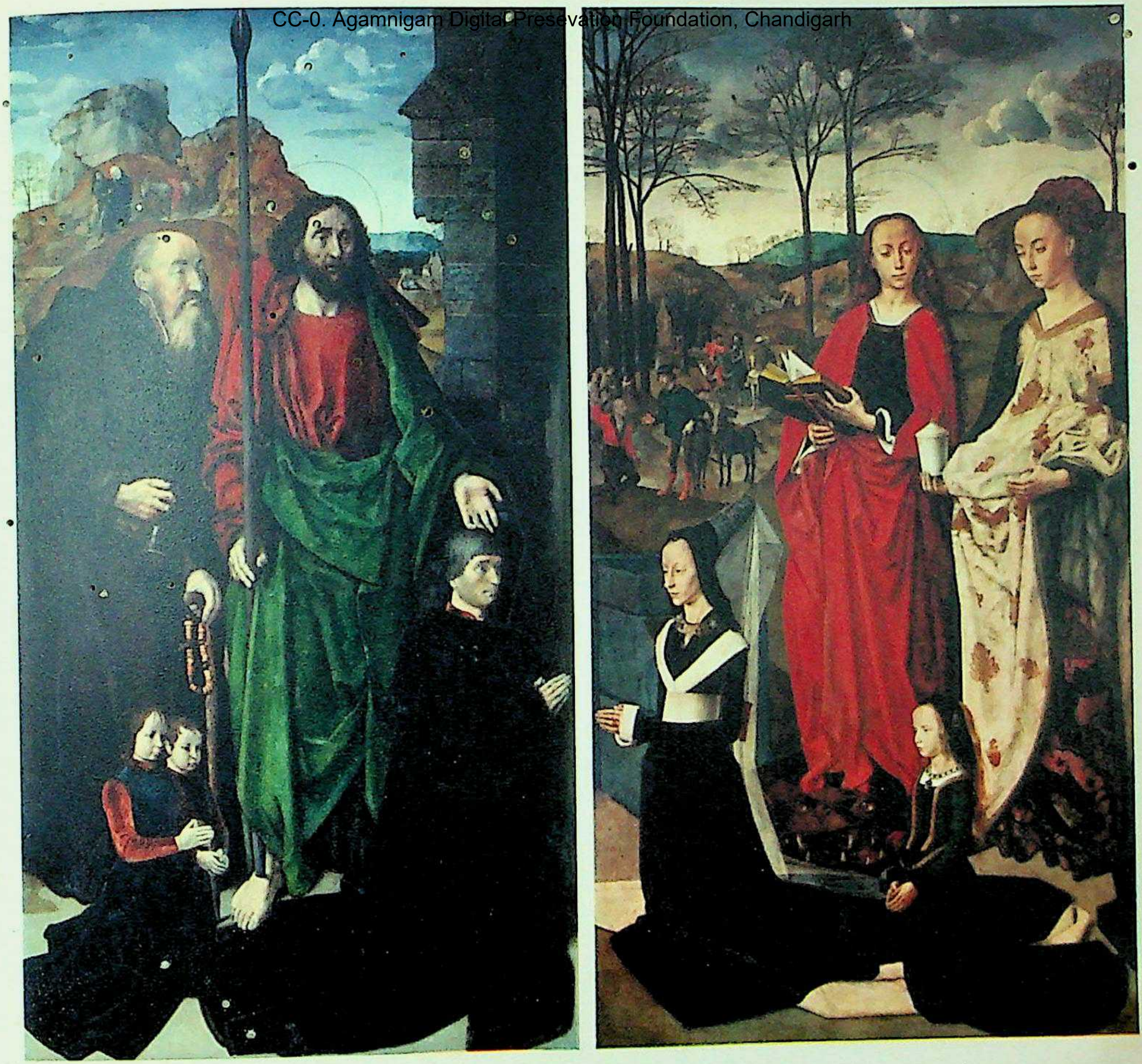


GERARD DAVID
The Deposition
National Gallery, London



GEERTGEN TOT SINT JANS
ST. JOHN IN THE WILDERNESS
Staatliche Museen, Berlin-Dahlem



HUGO VAN DER GOES
THE PORTINARI ALTARPIECE
Wings: THE DONORS WITH THEIR CHILDREN AND PATRON SAINTS 1476–8
Uffizi, Florence

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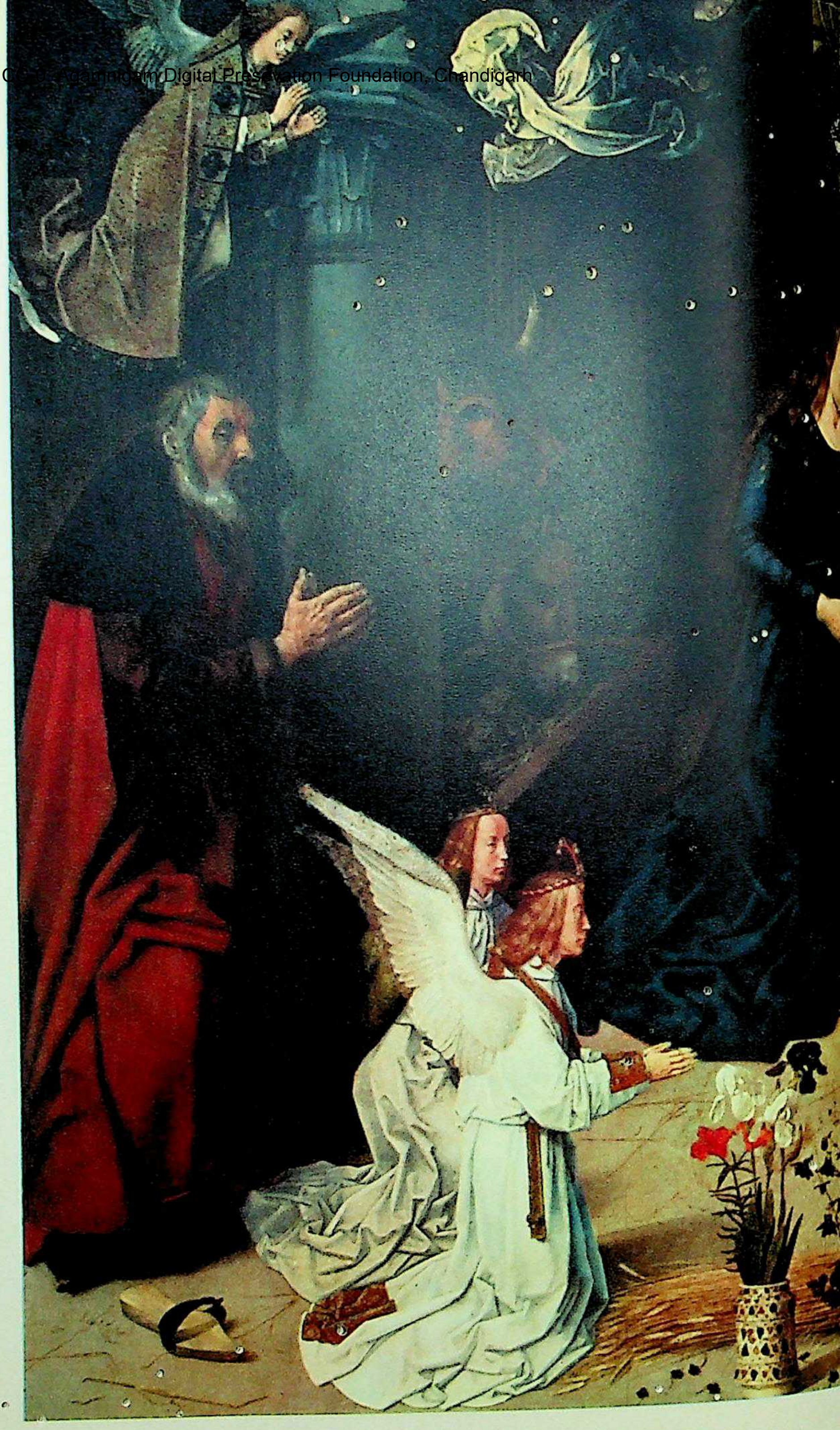

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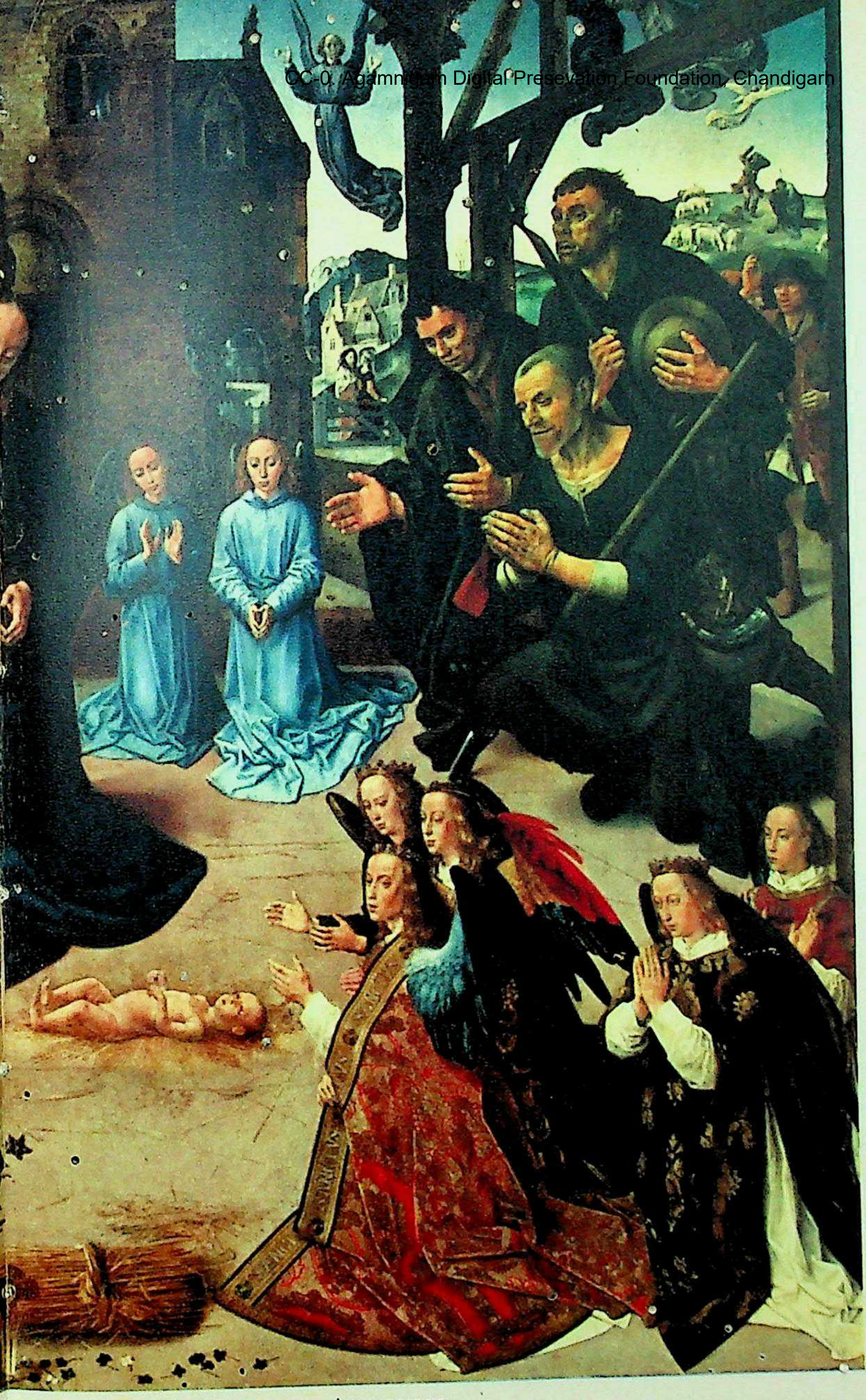
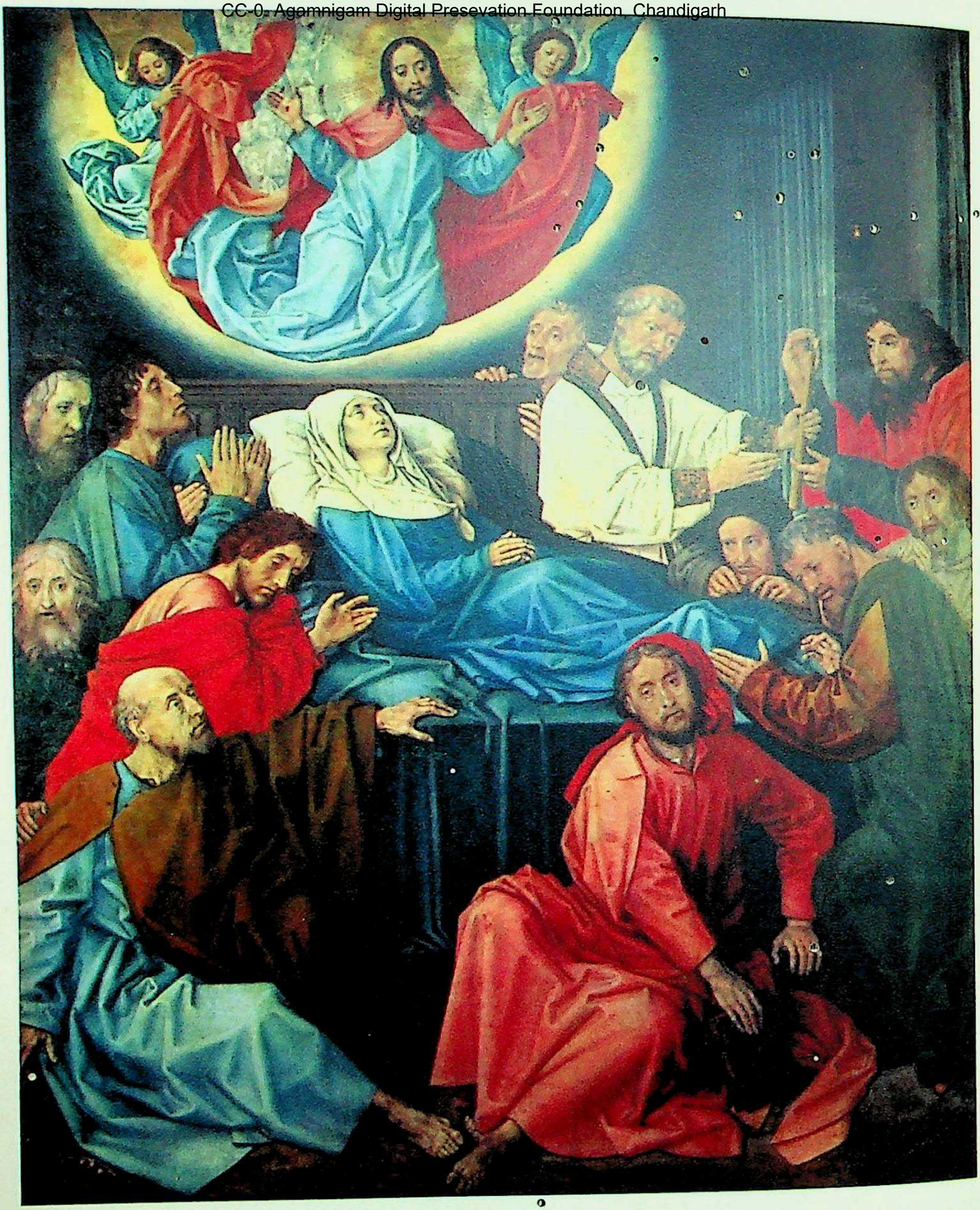
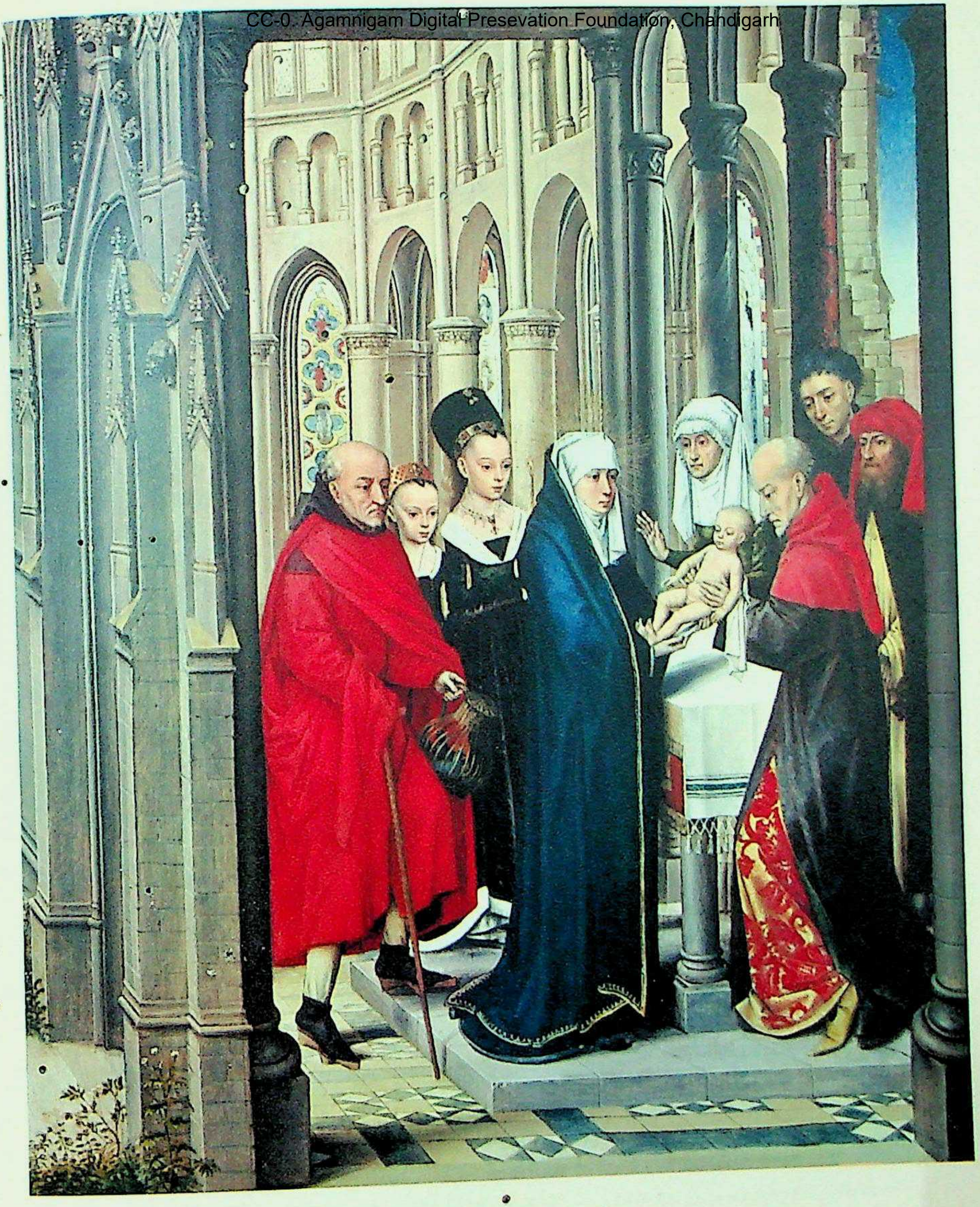


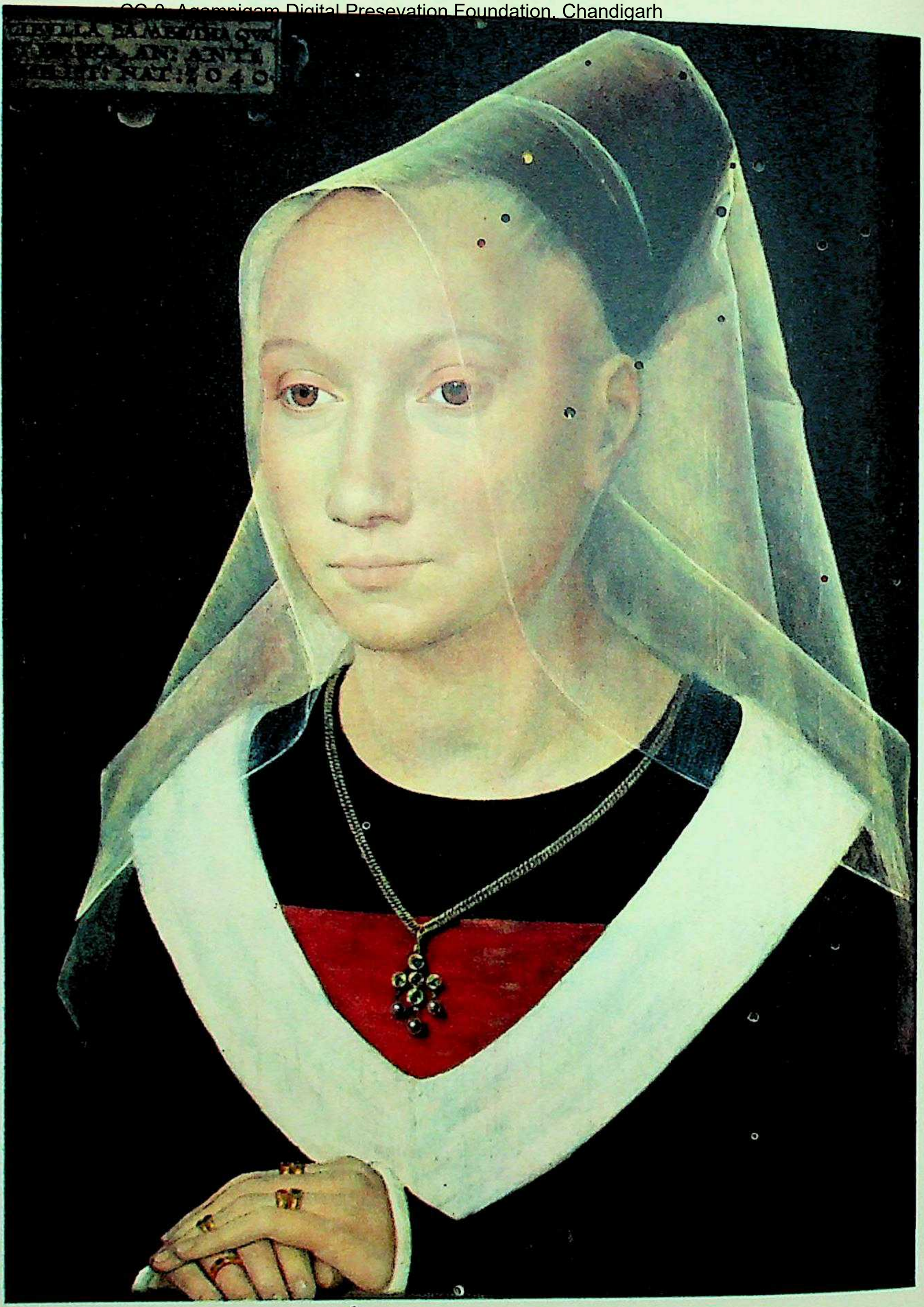
THE PORTINARI ALTARPIECE
Central Panel: THE ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS 1476–8
Uffizi, Florence



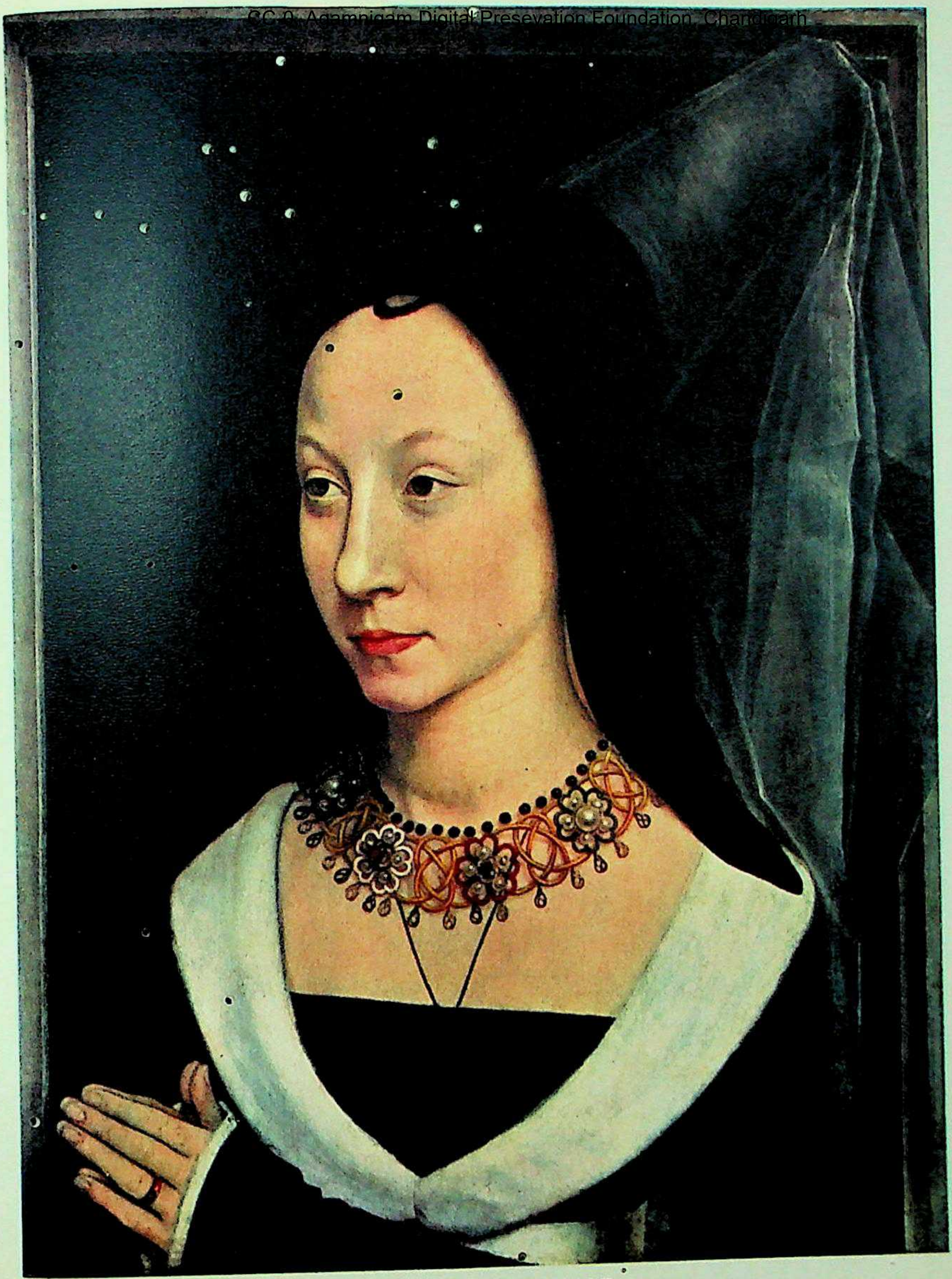
HUGO VAN DER GOES
THE DEATH OF THE VIRGIN After 1458
Musée Communal, Bruges



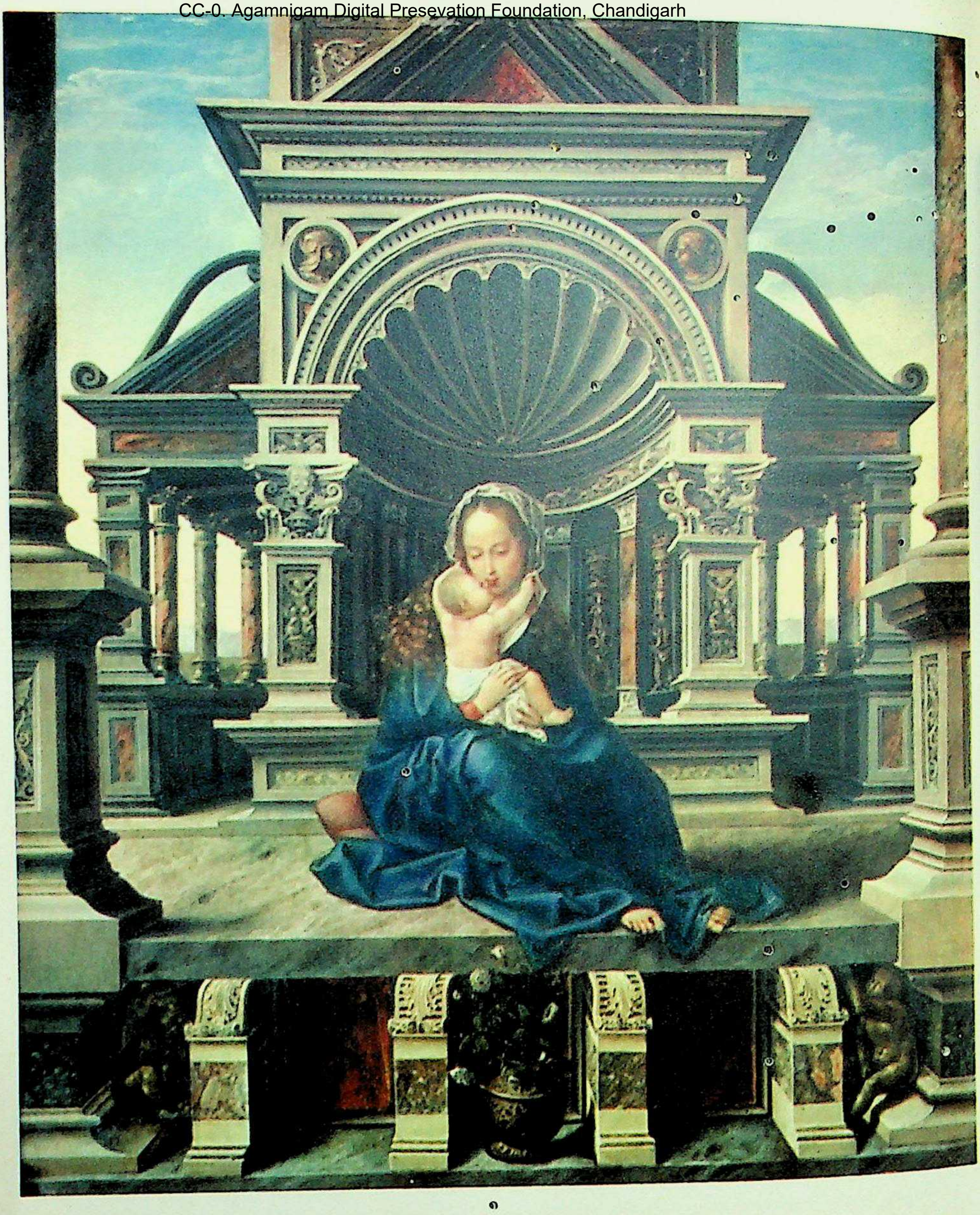
HANS MEMLINC
The Presentation in the Temple c. 1463
National Gallery of Art, Washington



HANS MEMLINC
Portrait of Maria Moreel 1480
Hospice St Jean, Bruges



HANS MEMLINC
PORTRAIT OF MARIA PORTINARI
Metropolitan Museum, New York



JAN GOSSAERT called MABUSE
THE VIRGIN OF LOVAÏNA c. 1516
Prado, Madrid

State Museum,
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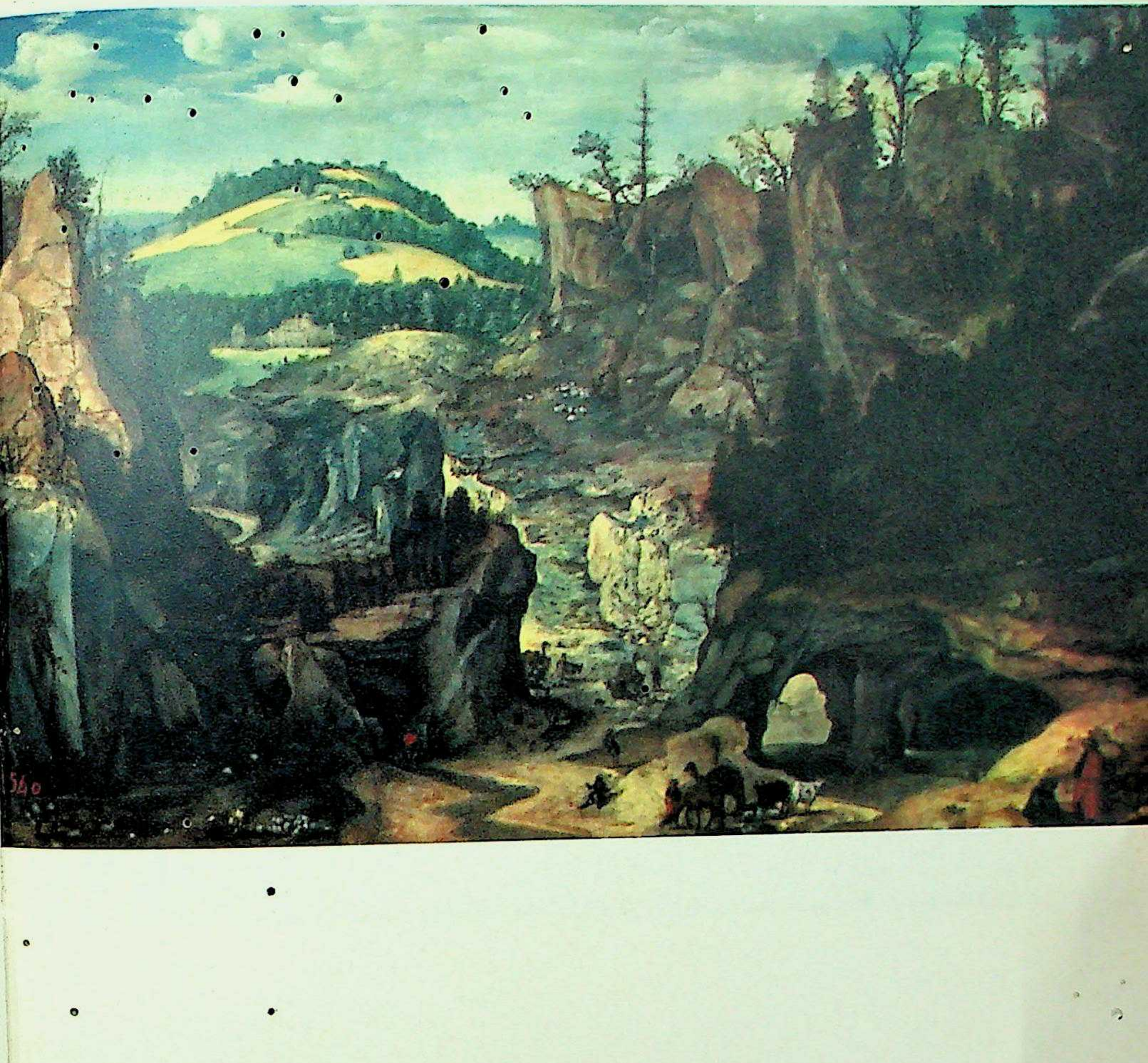
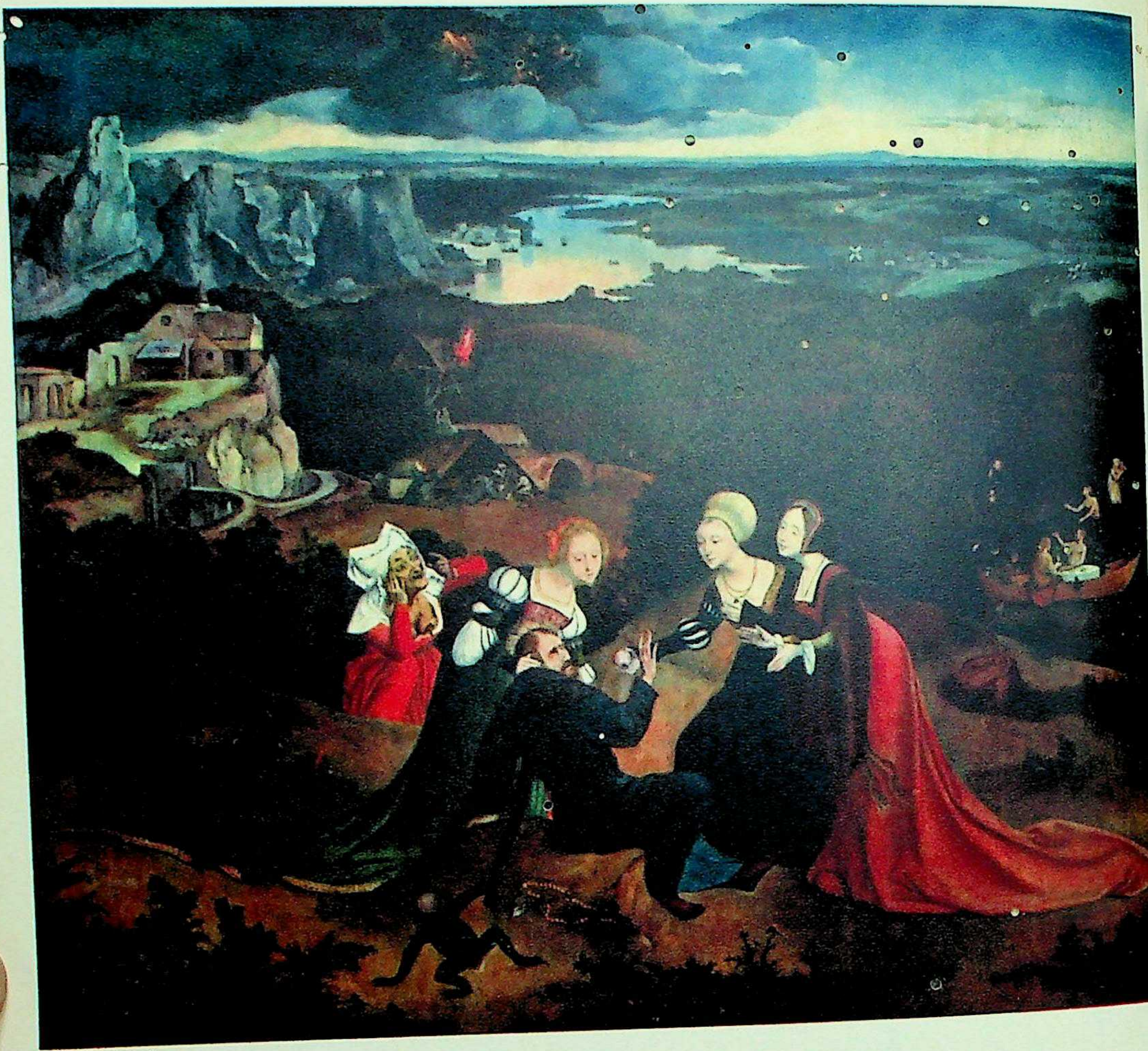
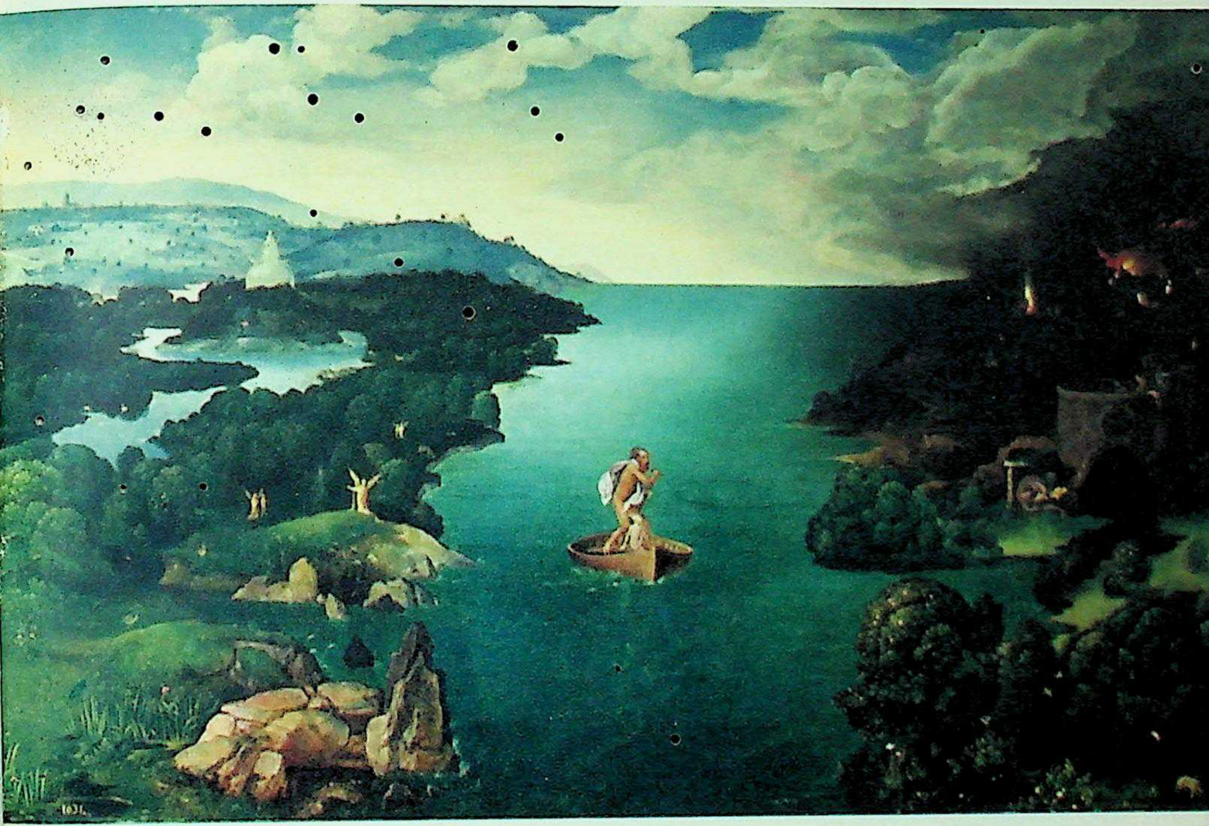


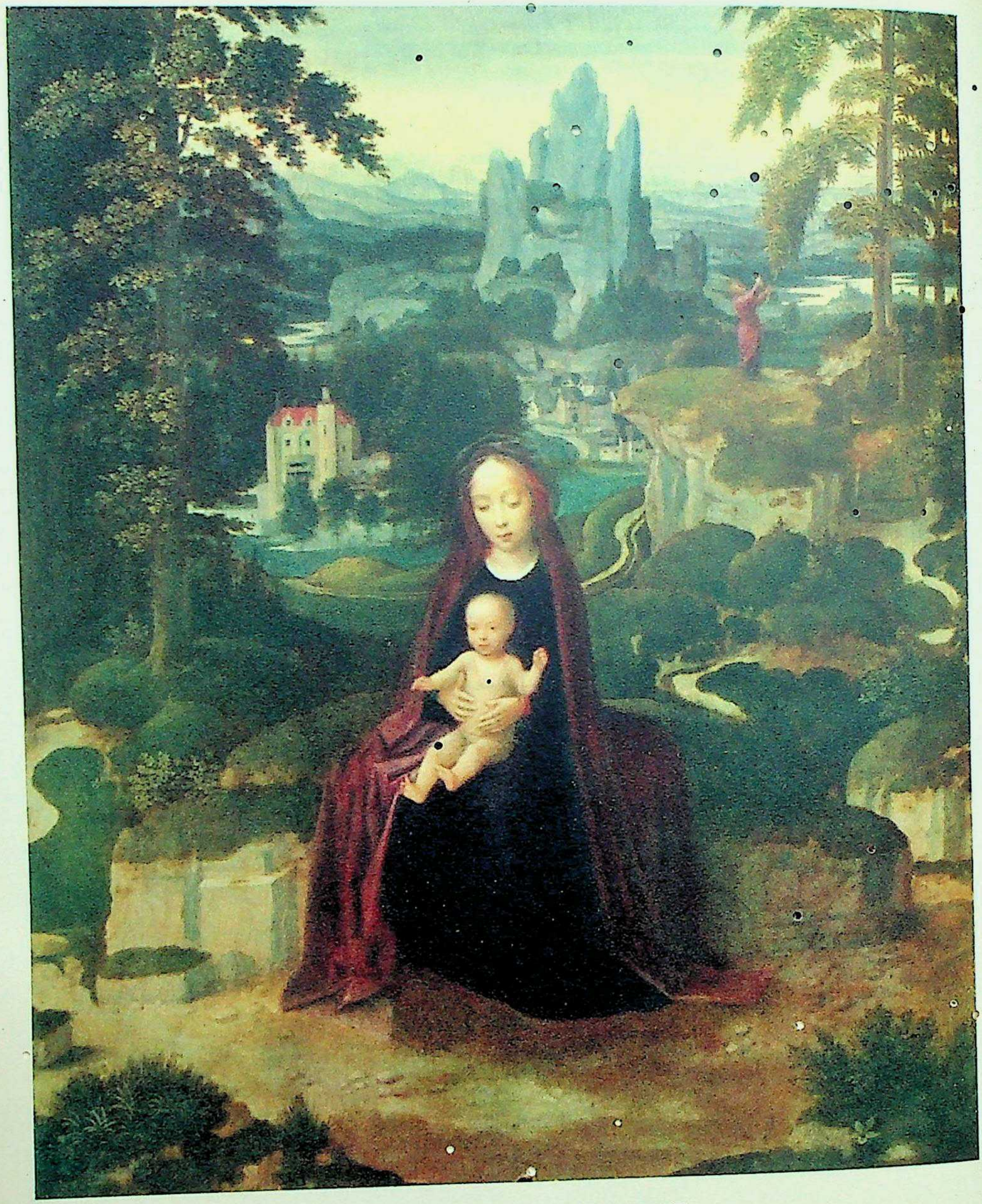
CORNELIS VAN DALEM
Landscape with Shepherds c. 1550–60
Prado, Madrid



JOACHIM PATENIER
THE TEMPTATION OF ST ANTHONY
Prado, Madrid



JOACHIM PATENIER
Charon crossing the Styx
Prado, Madrid



ADRIAEN ISENBRANDT
The Rest on the Flight
Alte Pinakothek, Munich

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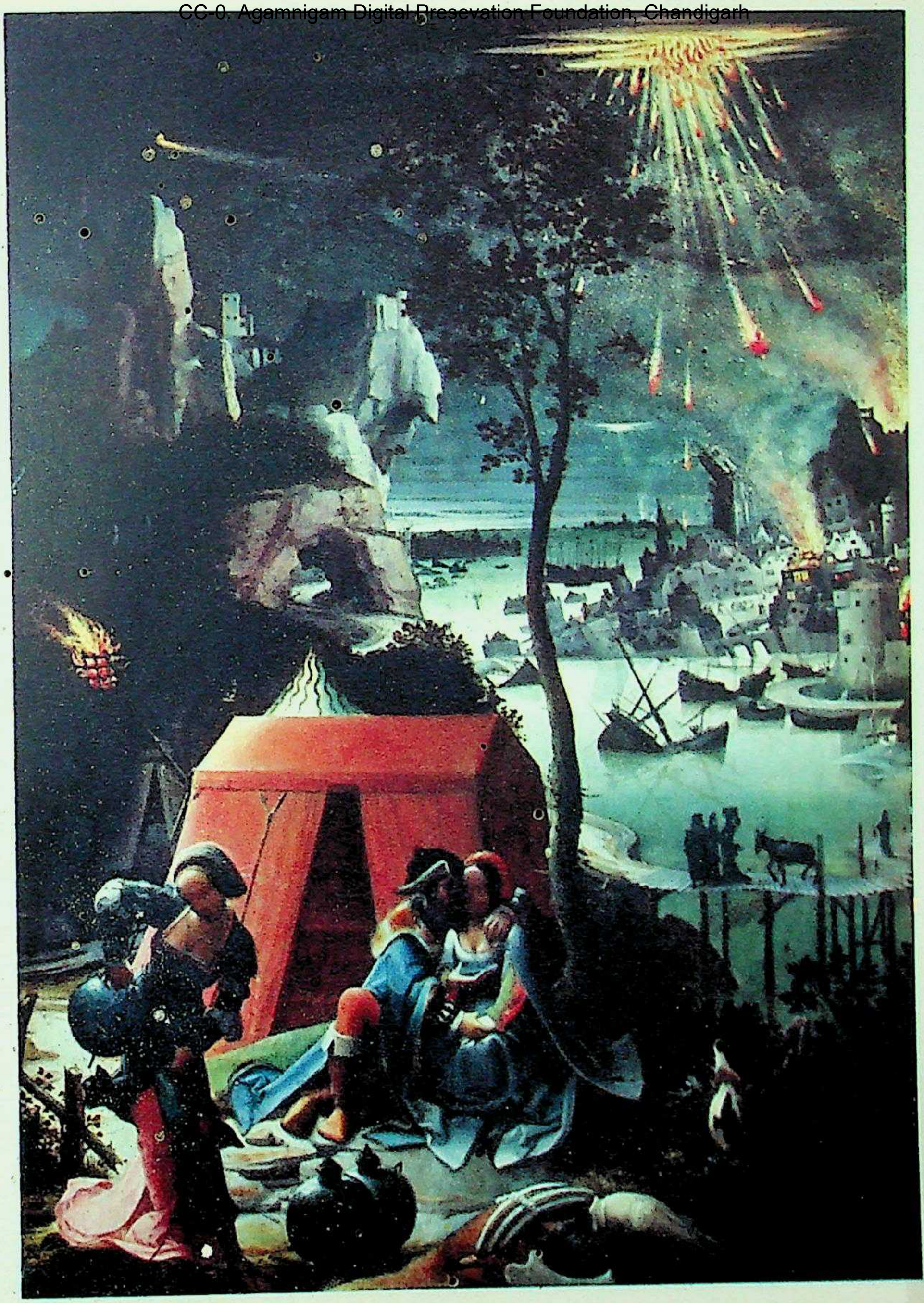
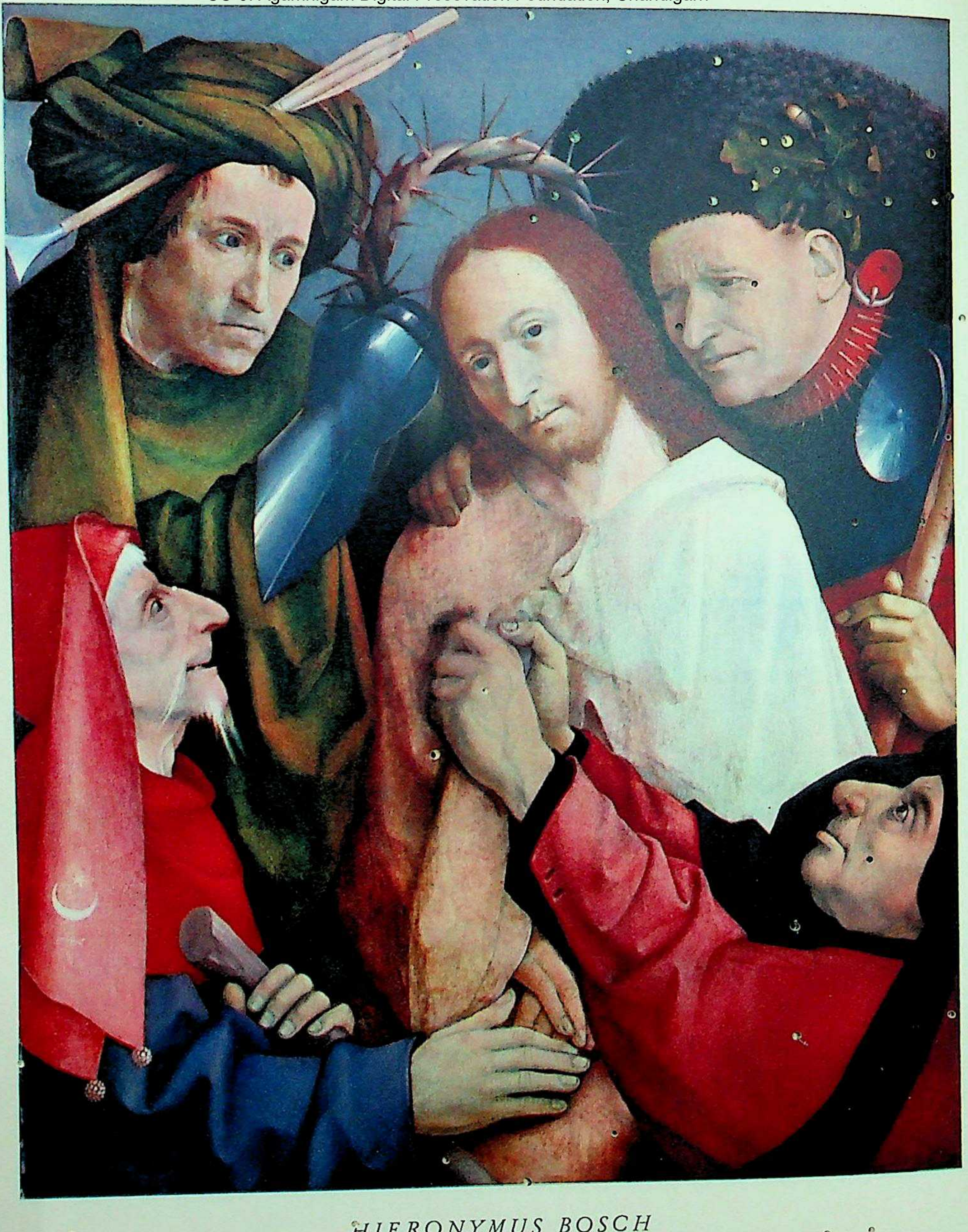
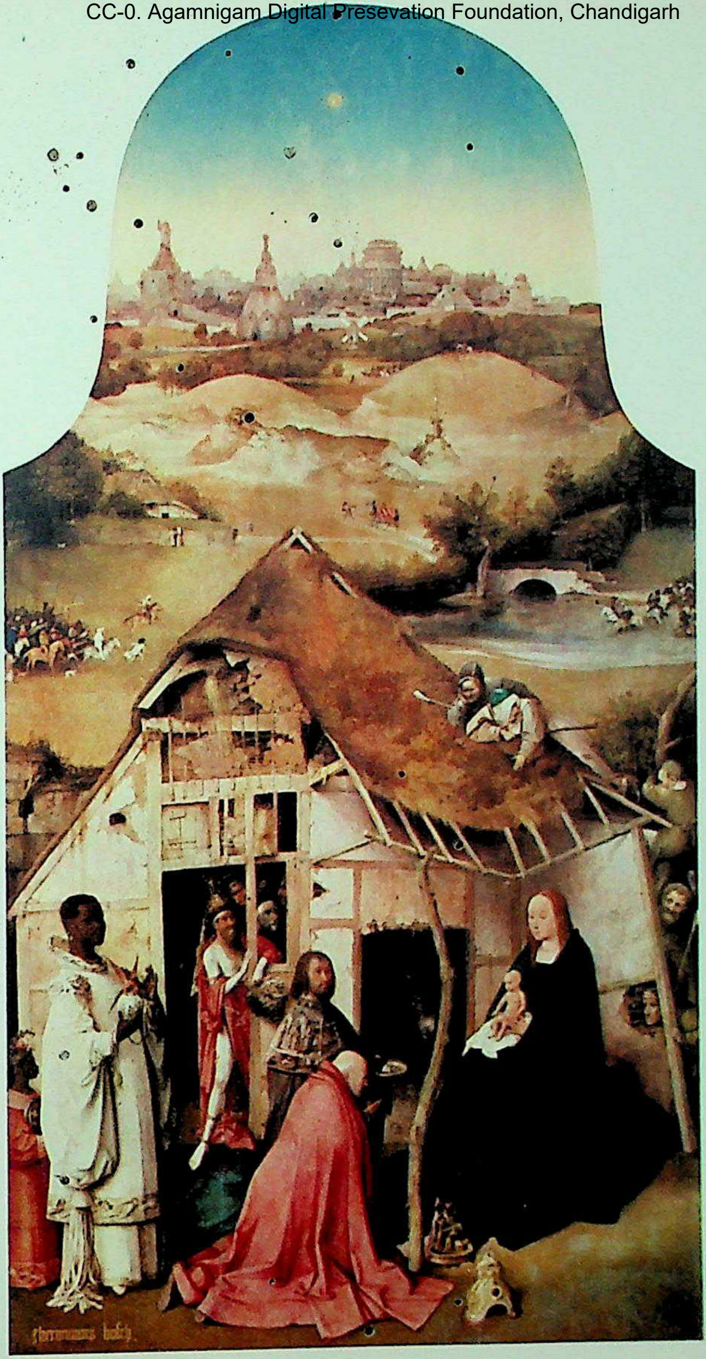


LUCAS VAN LEYDEN
Lot and his Daughters
Louvre, Paris

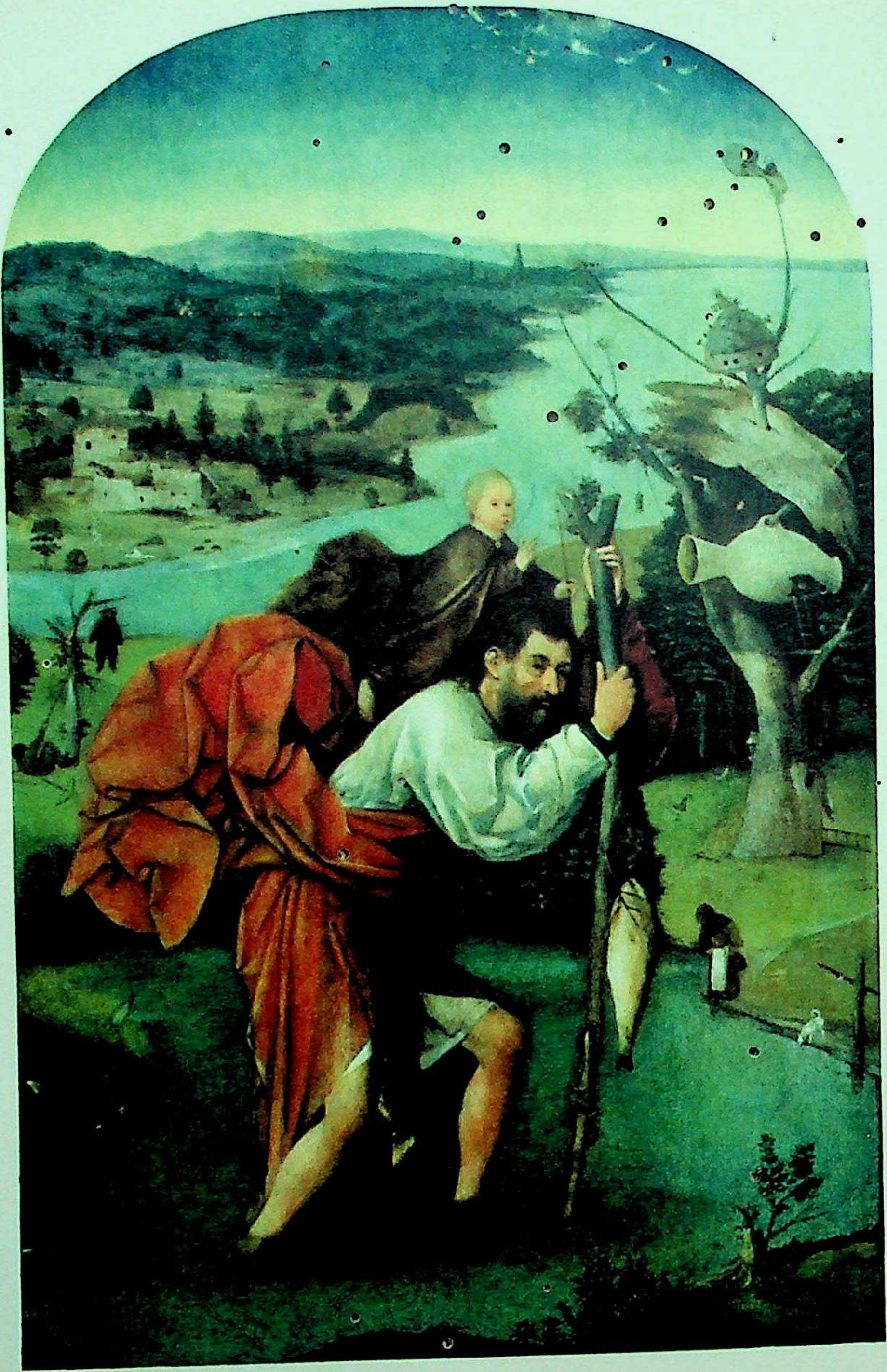


HIERONYMUS BOSCH
The Crowning with Thorns c. 1490–1500
National Gallery, London



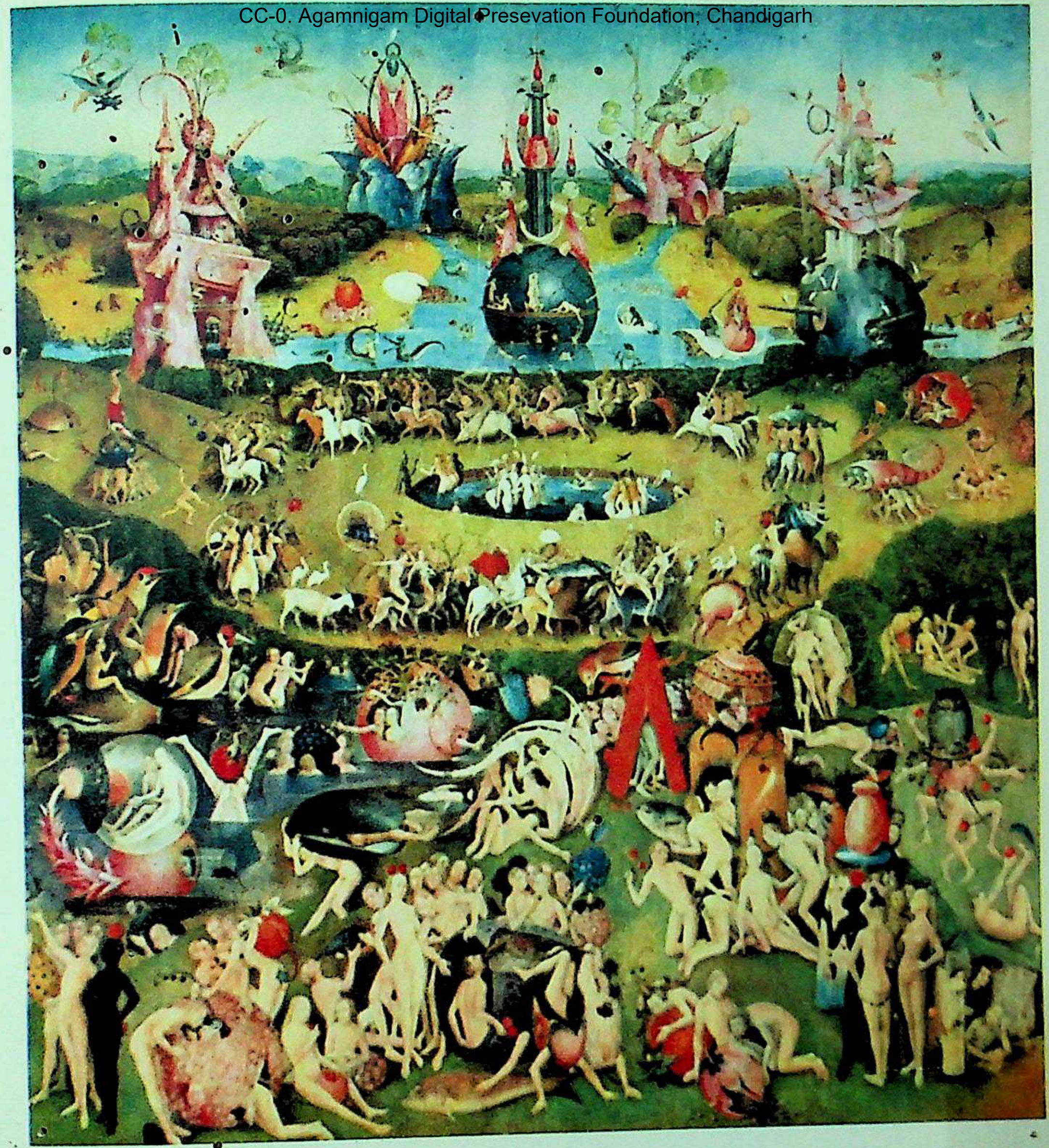
Jheronimus bosch

HIERONYMUS BOSCH
THE ADORATION OF THE KINGS C. 1495
Prado, Madrid

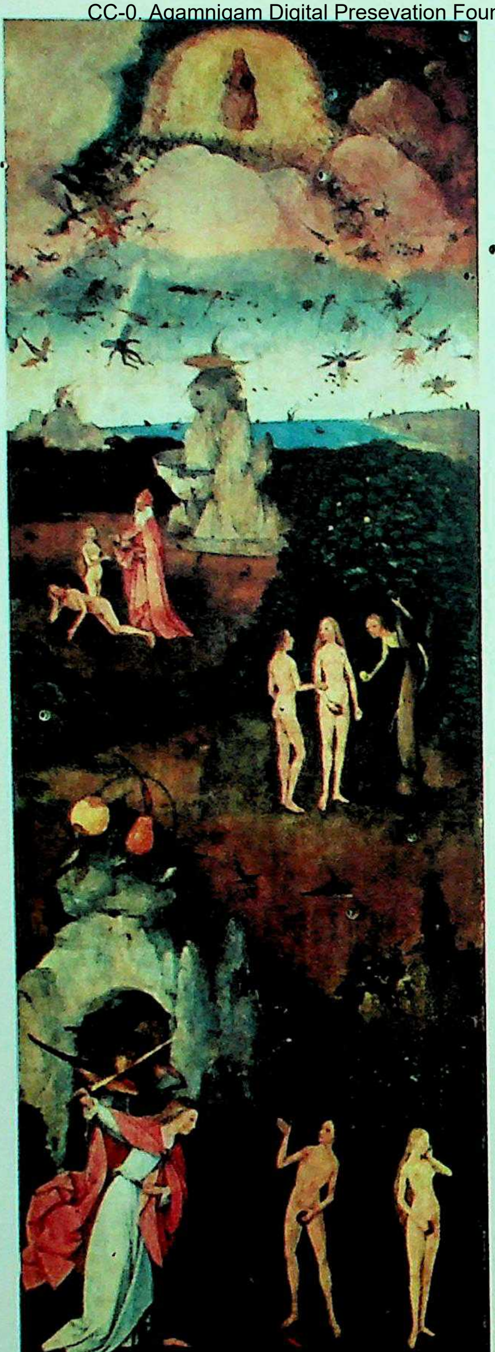


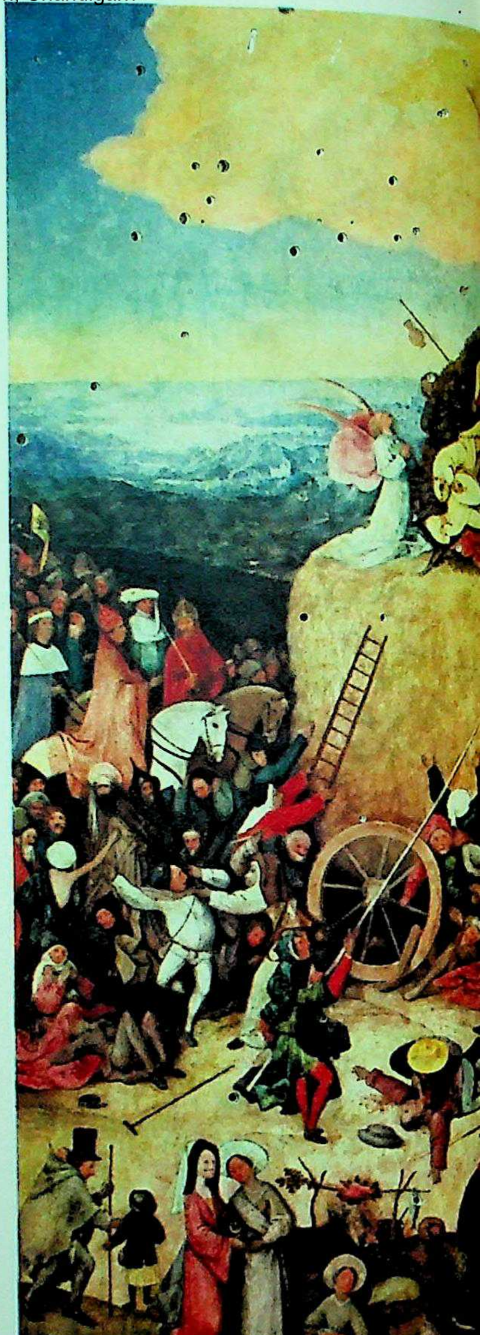
HIERONYMUS BOSCH
St Christopher c. 1490–1500
Boymans Museum, Rotterdam

LUCKNOW.

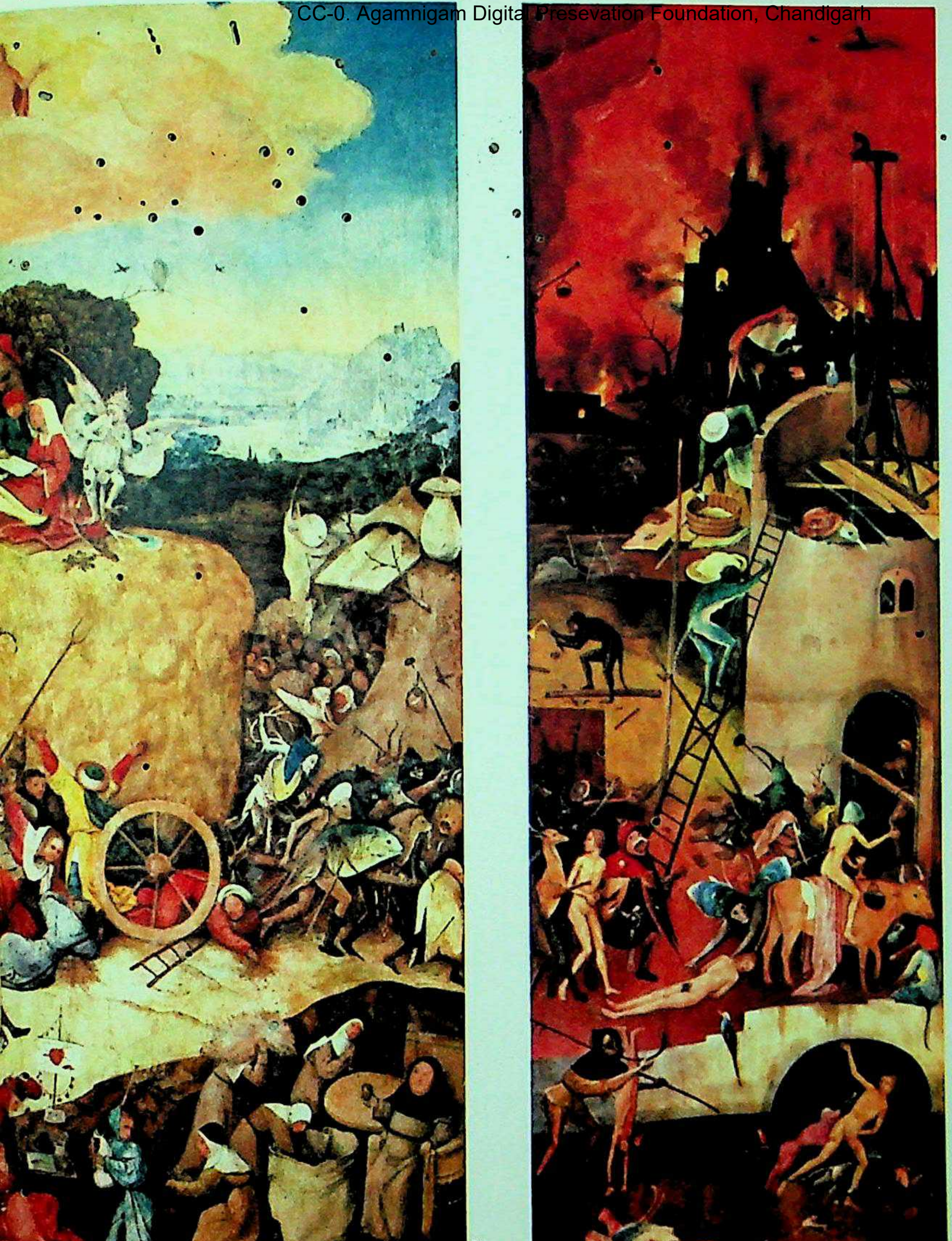


HIERONYMUS BOSCH
THE GARDEN OF DELIGHTS c. 1485
Prado, Madrid

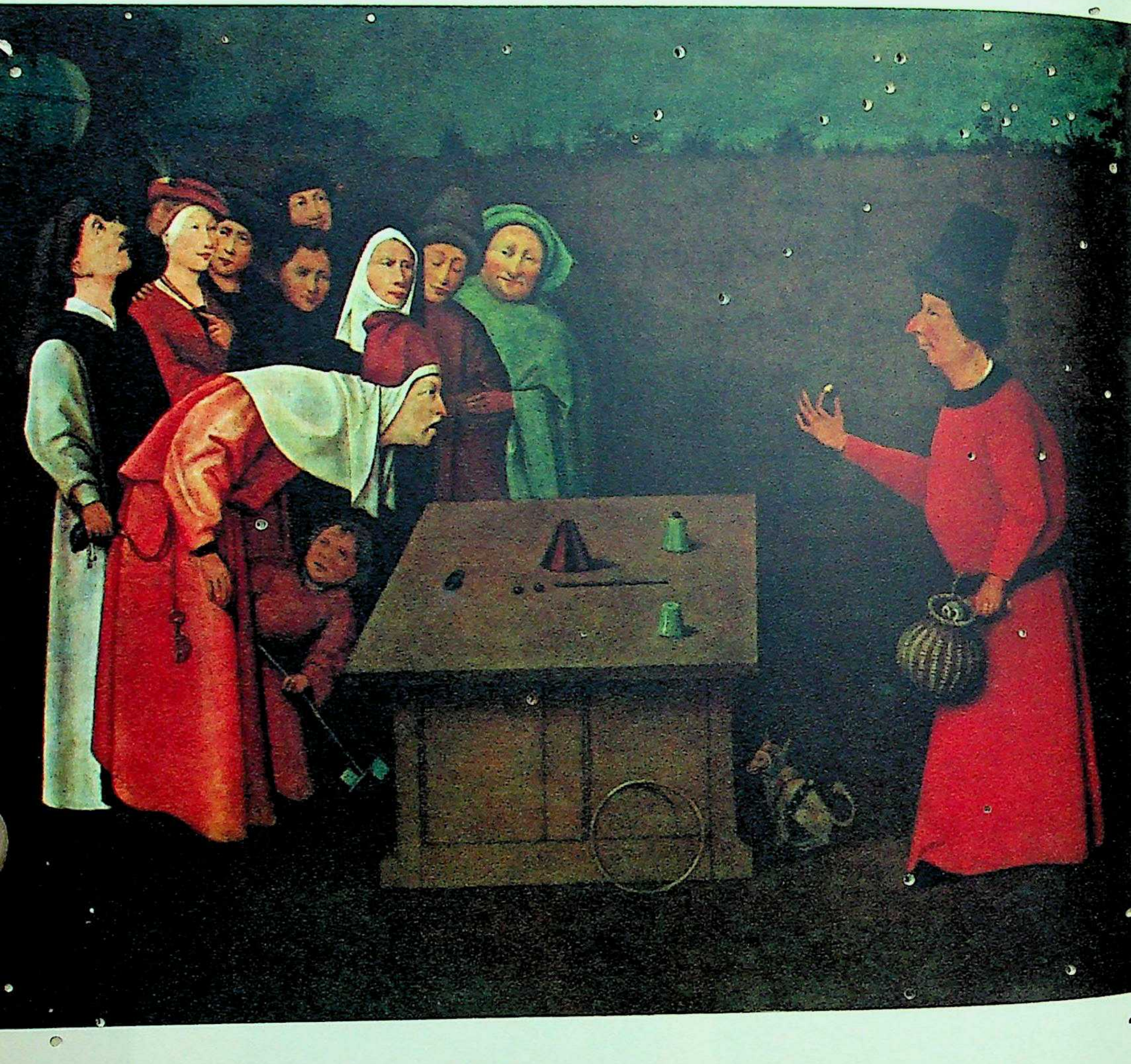




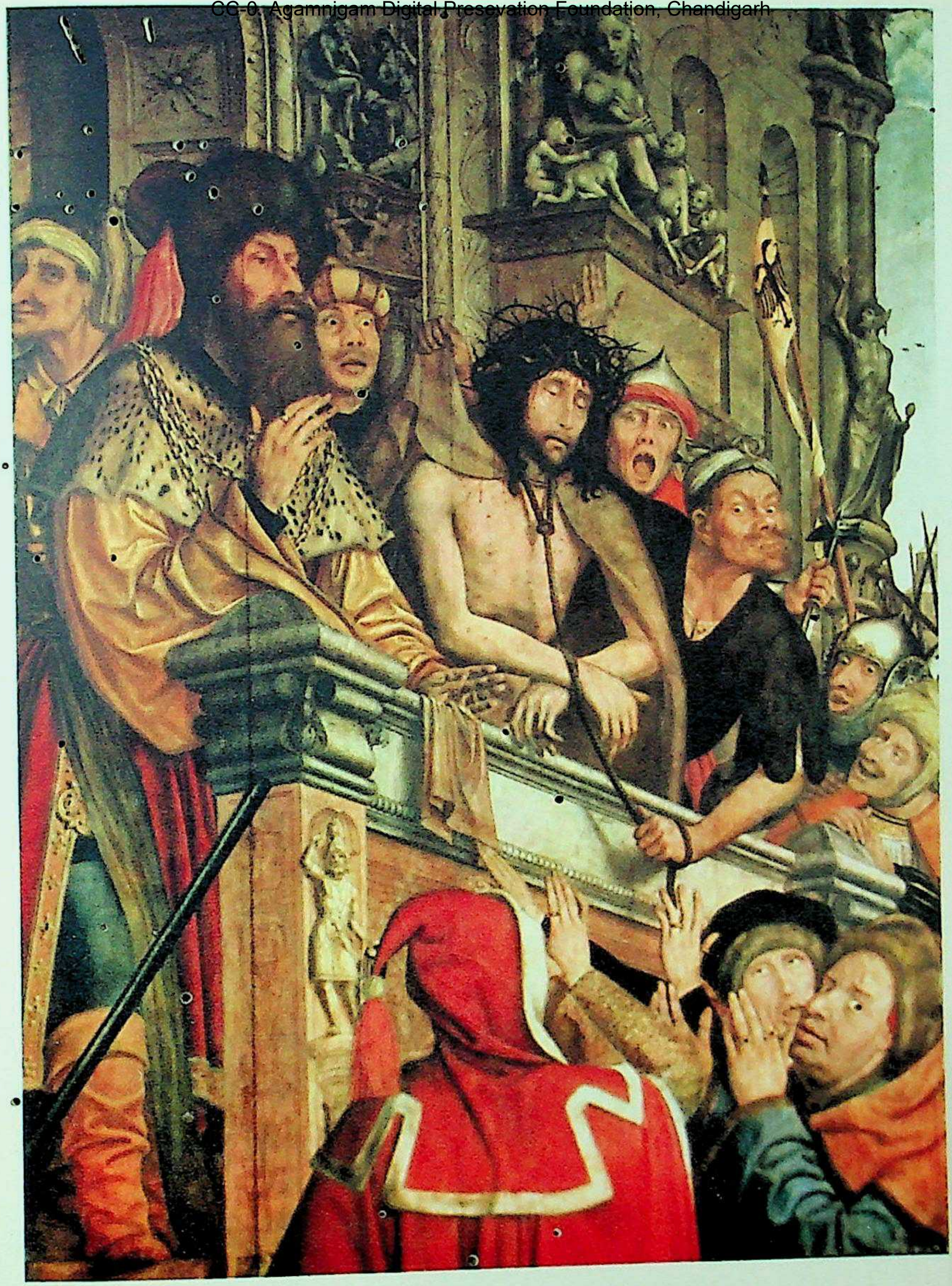
HIERONYMUS BOSCH


jheronimus bosch

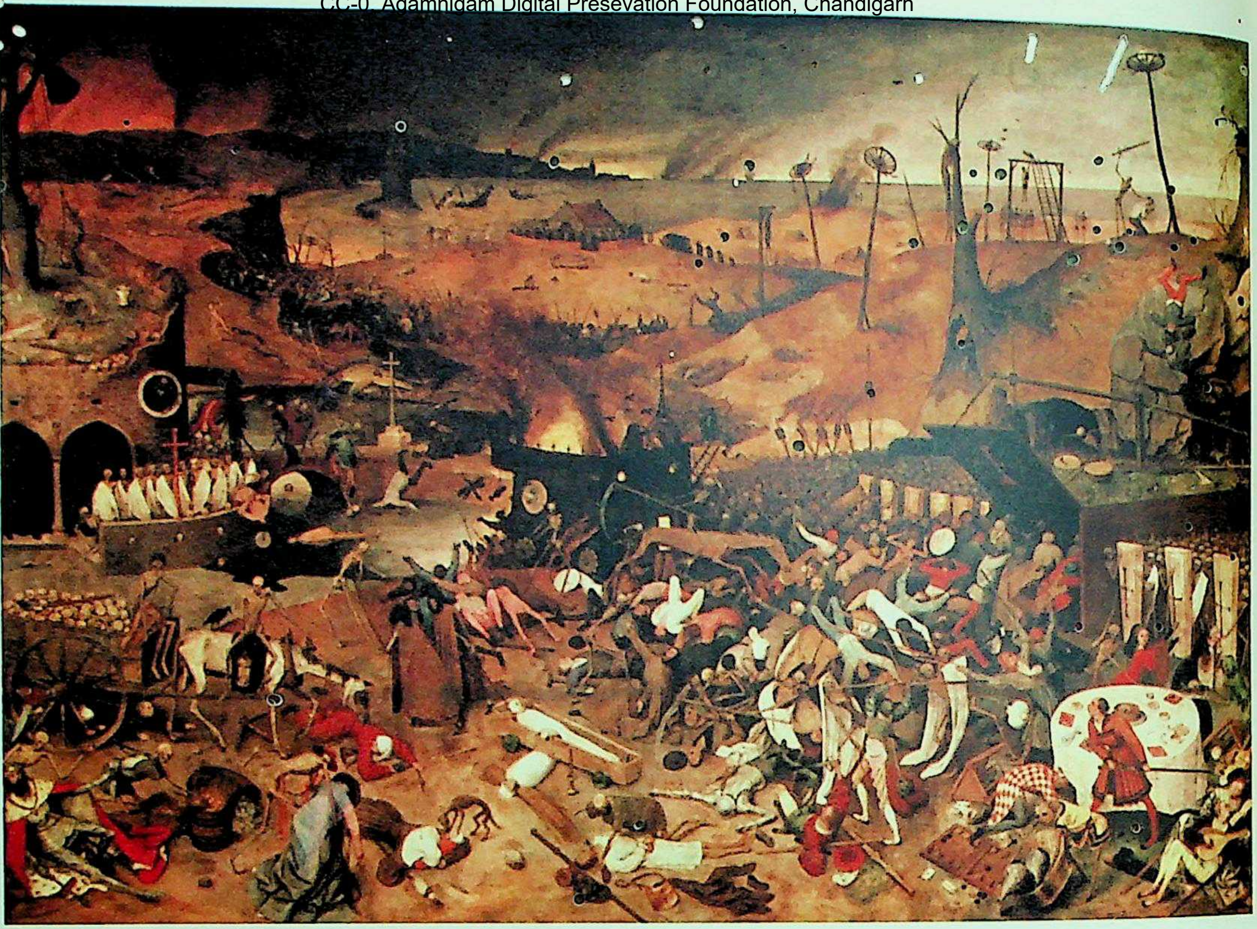
The Hay-Wain c. 1480
Prado, Madrid



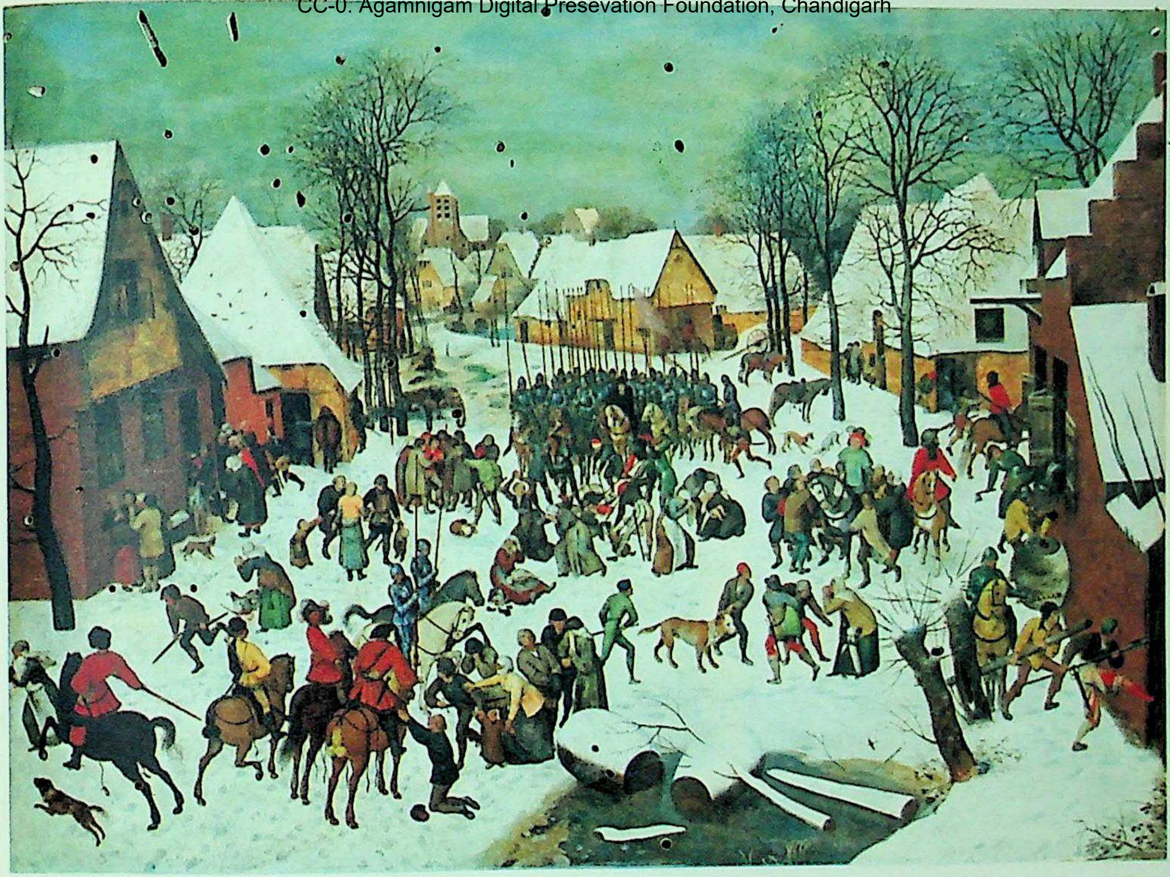
HIERONYMUS BOSCH
The Conjuror
Musée Municipal, St-Germain-en-Laye



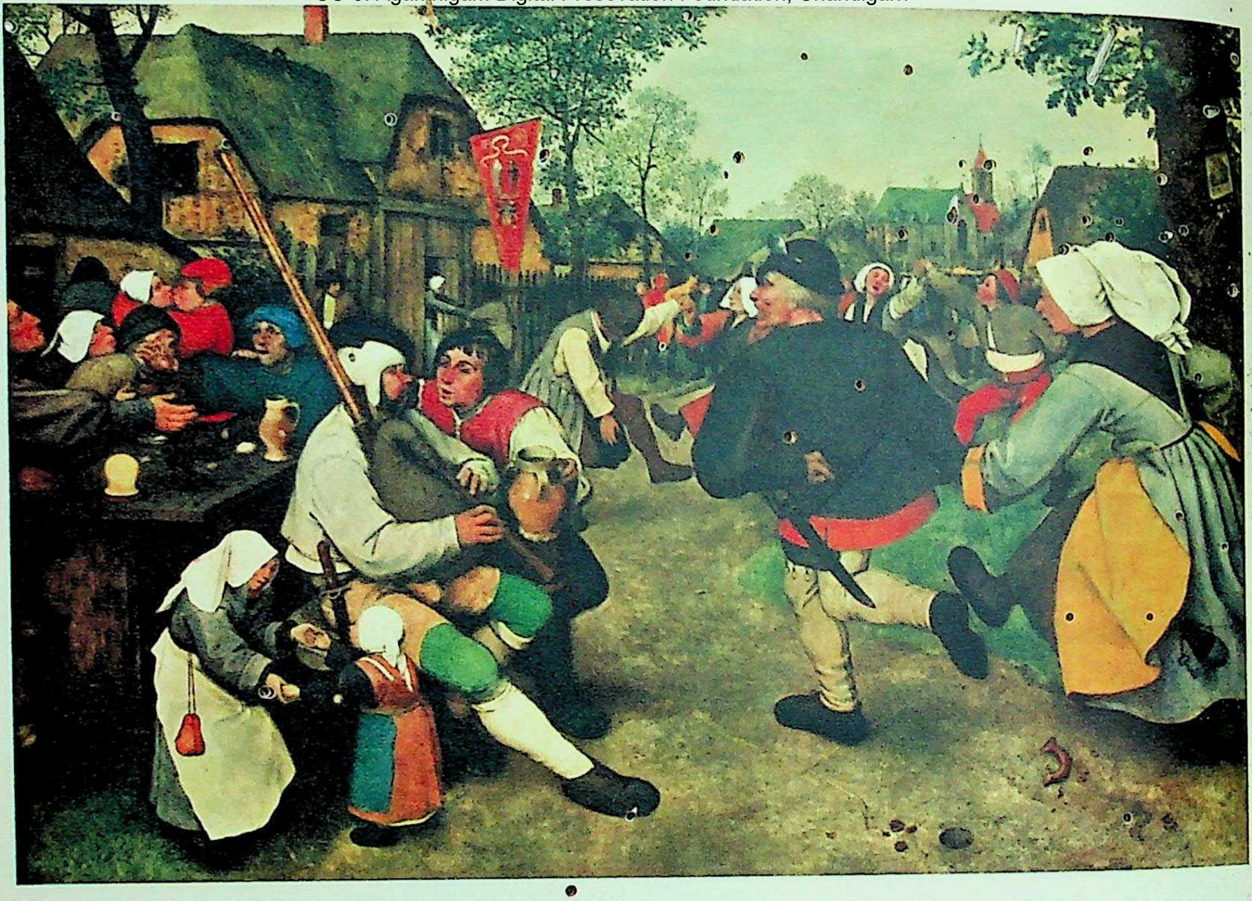
QUINTEN MASSYS
CHRIST PRESENTED TO THE PEOPLE
Prado, Madrid



PIETER BREUGHEL THE ELDER
The Triumph of Death 1562
Prado, Madrid



PIETER BREUGHEL THE ELDER
The Massacre of the Innocents c. 1567
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna



PIETER BREUGHEL THE ELDER
THE PEASANT DANCE c. 1566
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

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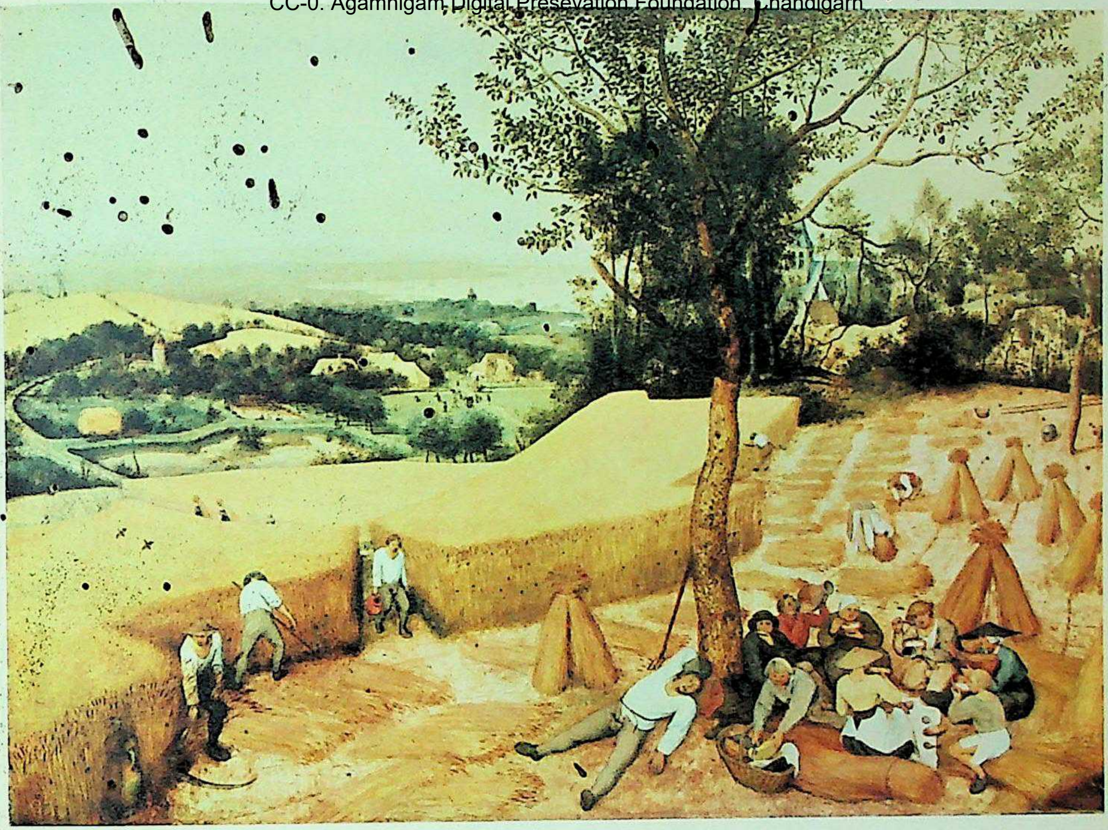
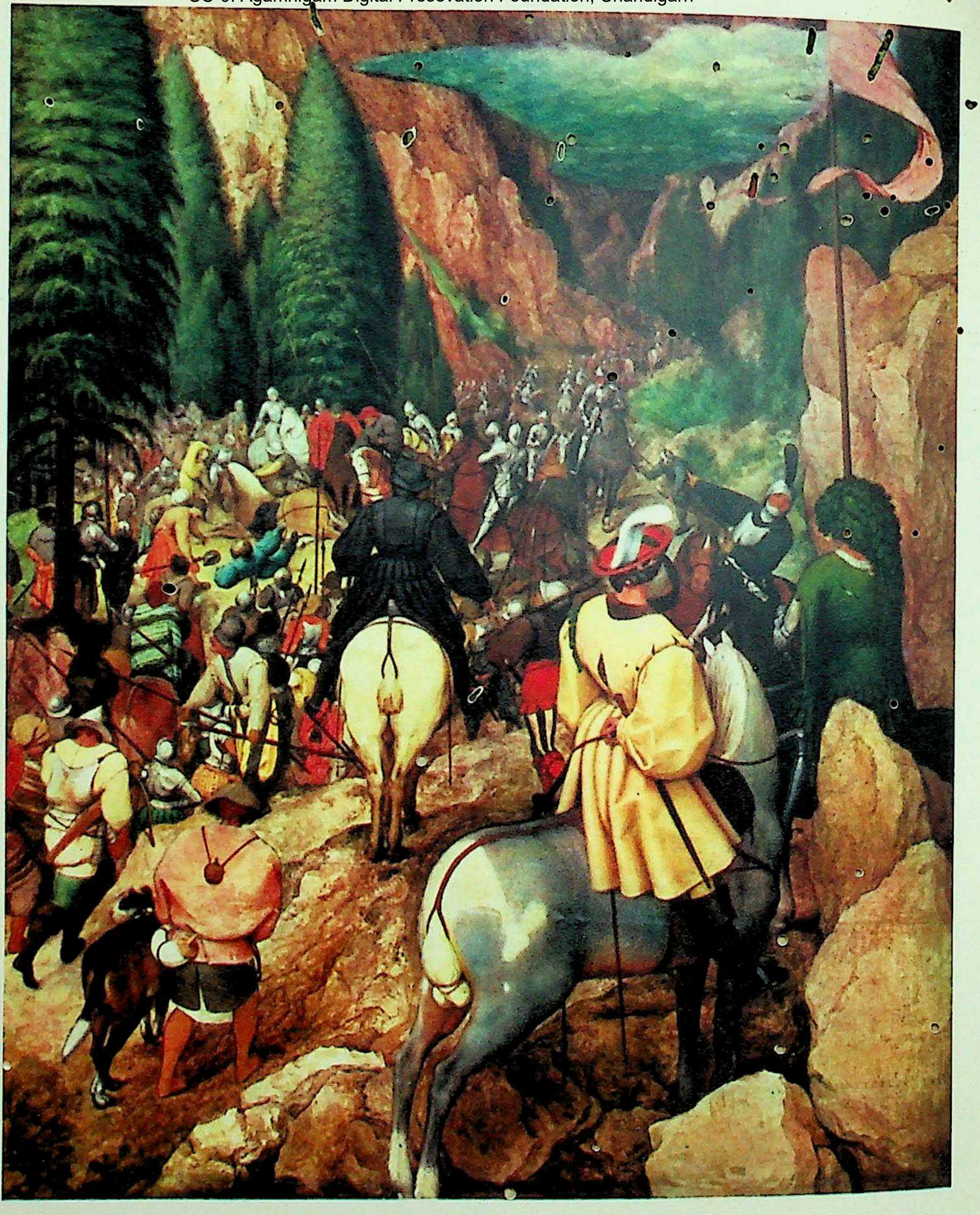


PIETER BREUGHEL THE ELDER
THE CORN HARVEST 1565
Metropolitan Museum, New York



PIETER BREUGHEL THE ELDER
THE CONVERSION OF ST PAUL 1567
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Hieronymus Bosch (van Aken), born at Bois-le-Duc ('sHertogenbosch) c. 1450—1460, died there in 1516. Came of a family of painters from Aix-la-Chapelle (Aken). Member of the Brotherhood of our Lady at Bois-le-Duc. Worked for his native town. In 1504 Philip the Handsome ordered from him a *Last Judgment*, which suggests that he visited Spain. Many of his pictures were acquired for Philip II. He was famous during his lifetime.

Dieric Bouts, born at Haarlem c. 1415, died at Louvain in 1475. Went to Brussels quite early in life. A pupil of Rogier van der Weyden. Settled in Louvain about 1457. Founder of the Louvain school of painting. Received title of official painter of Louvain in 1468. Buried in the church of the Franciscans there.

Pieter Breughel the Elder, born c. 1525—30 at Brögel, died at Brussels in 1569. Worked as an engraver at Antwerp for Hieronymus Cock. Master of the Antwerp Guild in 1551. In 1552 visited Italy. Married in 1563 and settled in Brussels. Had two sons, Pieter and Jan. Ancestor of a long line of painters including the Teniers.

Melchior Broederlam, born at Ypres. Was active between 1381 and 1409. Painter and *valet de chambre* to Philip the Bold. In about 1387 he made designs for paved floors for the château de Hesdin. Then worked at the château de Walle at Ghent. Began working on two altarpieces at Dijon in about 1398.

Petrus Christus, born at Baerle, died at Bruges in 1472. Master at Bruges in 1454. Probably worked in Van Eyck's studio. Painted for Cambrai Cathedral. Member of a religious brotherhood at Bruges in 1462. Some twenty pictures are attributed to him.

Cornelis van Dalem, landscape painter. Pupil of Jan Andriessen, at Antwerp, in 1545. Master in 1556.

Gerard David, born at Oudewater c. 1460. Died at Bruges in 1523. Worked at Bruges, becoming master in the Bruges Guild in 1484. Official painter to the city. Is believed to have visited Italy in 1511—12. Settled at Antwerp in 1515. Member of the Guild of St Luke at Antwerp. Isenbrandt, one of the last of the Bruges painters, was his pupil.

Jan van Eyck, born c. 1385—90 at Maaseyck. Died at Bruges in 1441. Worked for John of Bavaria at The Hague in 1422. From 1425 to his death he was painter and *valet de chambre* to Philip the Good. Worked at Lille, then made journeys for the House of Burgundy first to Aragon, then to Portugal where he painted a portrait of the Infanta Isabella. Is known to have visited Tournai in 1427. Settled finally at Bruges in 1430, and married there. Received official visits from the Burgomaster of Bruges and the Duke of Burgundy, and lived the well-to-do life of a court painter.

HUGO VAN DER GOES, born probably at Ghent c. 1420—40, died at Brussels in 1482. Master in the Painters' Guild at Ghent in 1465. Worked at Bruges in 1467 on the occasion of the marriage of Charles the Bold with Margaret of York. Became the *doyen* of the Ghent Guild c. 1475. Entered the monastery of the Rode Klooster at Andergen near Brussels as a lay brother. Continued to paint. Visited Cologne c. 1481. On his return, suffered the first of several attacks of a nervous disease and tried to commit suicide.

JAN GOSSAERT called MABUSE, born c. 1470, died at Antwerp c. 1535. Son of a bookbinder. Served his apprenticeship at Bruges and completed his training at Antwerp, where he was received as a master in 1503. Left for Rome with Philip of Burgundy in 1508, then visited Florence, Verona and Venice. Returned to Flanders and lived in Brussels and at Malines. Was working at Utrecht c. 1516. When his protector the Duke of Burgundy died, Mabuse entered the service of the Duke's nephew. Worked in his last years at Middelburg and at Ghent.

ADRIAEN ISENBRANDT, born towards the end of the 15th century, died at Bruges in 1551. Was working at Bruges in 1510 and was enrolled as a master in its Guild. A pupil of Gerard David.

LUCAS VAN LEYDEN, born at Leyden in 1494, died there in 1533. Engraver and painter, a pupil of his father Huygh Jacobsz and later of Cornelis Engelbrechtsz. His name appears on the list of the cross-bowmen of Leyden from 1514—19. Was at Antwerp in 1521 and met Dürer there. Visited Middelburg in 1527. Travelled with Mabuse to Ghent, Malines and Antwerp. Few pictures can be attributed to him with certainty.

MASTER OF THE 'HEURES DU MARECHAL DE BOUCICAUT', 15th-century miniature painter. Worked probably in Paris. Painted the *Heures de Jean le Meingre*. Detail of his life unknown.

MASTER OF FLÉMALLE, has been identified with Robert Campin, who was born at Valenciennes c. 1380, and died in 1444. Became master at Tournai c. 1405 and burgess of that city in 1410. Member of one of the three Councils of the city. Is known to have been at Bruges, Liège and in the north of France.

HANS MEMLINC, born at Seligenstadt near Frankfurt-am-Main c. 1430, died at Bruges in 1494. Probably lived first at Cologne and then at Brussels, but certainly received training in Flanders early on. Settled at Bruges c. 1467, and became a burgess of that city. Owned three houses. Was by 1480 one of the richest burgesses of the place.

QUINTEN MASSYS, born at Louvain c. 1465, died in 1530. Son of a blacksmith. Trained at Louvain. Established himself permanently at Antwerp in 1491, and became a master of the Guild of St Luke in that year. Had contacts with the humanists, in particular with Erasmus.

JOACHIM PATINIER, born at Bouvines in 1480, died at Antwerp in 1524. Served his apprenticeship probably at Bruges. Became a master at Antwerp in 1515. Friend and collaborator of Massys.

GEERTGEN TOT SINT JANS, born probably at Leyden c. 1460, died at Haarlem c. 1495. Settled at Haarlem where he was official painter to the Order of the Knights of St John. One of his principal works was the triptych which adorned the main altar of their chapel.

ROGIER VAN DER WEYDEN, born at Tournai c. 1400, died at Brussels on June 18th, 1464. Married in 1426, and was apprenticed to Robert Campin in 1427. Received as a master in the Tournai Guild in 1432. Mentioned as official painter at Brussels in 1435. Sent to Rome in 1450 on the occasion of the Jubilee of the Holy Year. Made a journey to Ferrara on behalf of Lionello d'Este. Entrusted by Chancellor Nicolas Rolin with the decoration of the chapel of the Hôtel-Dieu at Beaune.

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